

**JAWAHAR LAL NEHRU  
AND HIS CRITICS  
1923-1947**

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AND HIS CRITICS  
1923-1947

A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO THE IDEAS OF NEHRU,  
GANDHI, SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE, M. N. ROY  
AND THE COMMUNISTS

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# भौतिक म विज्ञविद्यालय

## सेन्ट्रल प्राइन्स

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## Preface

THE work is based on a dissertation Submitted to the University of Delhi for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science. In this work an attempt is made to analyse the political ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru and his critics covering a period from 1923 to 1947. This period marks a distinct phase in the evolution of Nehru's political career as well as in the history of Indian nationalist movement. It was in December 1923 that Nehru was, for the first time appointed as one of the General Secretaries of the Indian National Congress and he continued to hold that position until 1925. His active political career actually started from this period. Since then, during the entire period of the nationalist movement, Nehru played an outstanding role and occupied a position second to that of Gandhi.

The evolution of his political ideas during the pre-independence period has been analysed in the larger context of the freedom movement. Though his ideas were subjected to adverse comments and criticisms by many, the present study is confined to his clash of ideas with Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, M.N. Roy and the Communists. These four were very outstanding, particularly among those who played a notable role in the long struggle for freedom. Their emergence on the Indian political scene and the kind of leadership which they sought to provide brought about a qualitative change in the character of the nationalist movement. But all of them had definite views and ideas about the nature and content of the movement as well as the methods of action to be pursued for the attainment of the goal.

The study limits the scope of its enquiry into the interaction of these nationalists with reference to their thinking on Nehru's ideas and the latter's reaction to them. Despite their divergent ideas, outlooks and approaches, they were all functioning mostly within the broad framework of the Indian National Congress and its programme of action. In other words, those contemporary leaders whose critical ideas and comments have been analysed and interpreted in the present study, were all working within the same broad framework of

the freedom struggle and they criticised each other only within that framework itself.

It is, therefore, quite logical if the use of the term "critics" is limited to the study of those who thought within the same broad framework of ideas. The study is not stretched too much to cover the ideas of Jinnah or Savarkar who actually belonged to a different school of thought though they too were the critics of Nehru. But they worked mainly as Nehru's political opponents and not just as critics. In fact these communal leaders stood alienated from the basic approach of Nehru and others. The present study is therefore an attempt to focus on the political ideas of Nehru, Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose and the communists and not on those of the communalist leaders.

As one of the makers of modern India, this study makes an attempt to assess Nehru's contribution to the growth and development of the nationalist movement. Also, as one of the most outstanding leaders in Indian public life during that period, Nehru's political ideas had a vital bearing on the development of the Indian political system. The ideas which he advocated, the principles and programme of action which he initiated, and the intellectual thrust with which he sought to analyse some of the national and international issues, during this period, inevitably brought Nehru into conflict with those four nationalists. The objective of the study is to highlight those issues and problems on which Nehru frequently clashed with them.

An attempt is made in this study to analyse the fundamental difference between Nehru and Gandhi in their understanding and approach to various issues and problems during the period of their active political association. Though Nehru continued to work as a devoted member of Gandhi's team and had broadly accepted his discipline, he had serious differences with Gandhi on many occasions. In fact Nehru had a unique relationship with Gandhi, in the sense that he was Gandhi's most critical follower. His critical examination of some part of Gandhi's programme made him more and more vocal on the social and economic content of the movement for independence. The study therefore tries to examine Gandhi's reactions to Nehru's criticism.

An attempt is also made in this study to throw some light on the critical views of Subhas Chandra Bose, M.N. Roy and the communists, on Gandhi whose role and ideas remained almost irreconcil-

able to them. But the fact that Nehru, in spite of his criticism, was the principal defender of Gandhi forms the central point of all their criticism of Nehru. One of the strongest critics of Nehru during the period under study was Subhas Chandra Bose whose role was more of a rebellious leader than of a camp-follower. He was also one of the most vocal critics of Gandhi. Bose believed that Nehru did the greatest harm to him by openly siding with the Gandhites. In all the crisis that followed the Tripuri Congress, Nehru stood closer to Gandhi and this was the main source of irritation to Bose. Nehru and Bose also had almost diametrically opposite views on many national and international issues.

Another focal point of this study is M.N. Roy's criticism of Nehru and the influence of the Communist International on the Indian nationalist movement and its impact on Nehru. In that context Nehru became a target of political attack by M.N. Roy who found a conflict of two cultures in Nehru. Roy made an interesting observation that the Indian nationalist movement was being guided by two men who actually belonged to two epochs of cultural history. While admiring many attributes of Nehru's personality, Roy commented that the secret of his mass popularity and power lay not in those meritorious personal qualities but in the "mystic and mysterious" relations with Gandhi.

The study also deals with the Indian communist criticism of Nehru and the latter's reactions to it. The clash between Nehru and the communists was largely confined to the bourgeois character of the movement as well as to the leadership of Gandhi. Nehru was condemned for his left reformism and was also regarded as an enemy of the struggle for freedom. Nehru was singled out and criticised for using revolutionary phraseology as a cover for carrying on a bourgeois policy of confusing and disorganising the revolutionary struggle of the masses and thereby for helping the Congress to compromise with imperialism. However the main point of friction between the two was the unrealistic assessment of the Indian political situation which the communists continued to maintain for many years. Nehru felt that their inability to get out of the intellectual domination of the Communist International and to make a balanced and meaningful political assessment of the class forces and interest groups operating in the National Congress led them to take a patently unpopular stand on many vital issues. Their open and adverse criticism of the most revered leaders

like Gandhi and Nehru helped only to accelerate the process of their alienation from the main stream of national politics.

The study made on the basis of an objective analysis of the data collected from the primary and secondary sources, concludes that the main point of friction between Nehru and others was with regard to the efficacy of the methods of action and the real content of the nationalist movement.

In the preparation of this work, I have received timely help and encouragement from Professor K.P. Karuakarao. His valuable suggestions enabled me to improve upon the form and content of this study. I am also indebted to Professor J.S. Bains and Professor Maheodra Kumar who were kind enough to spare their valuable time for going through the manuscript and giving me extremely useful suggestions. I am greatly thankful to Professor Manosanjan Mohanty, and Professor M.P. Singh for all the help they gave me in the completion of this work.

I am also grateful to the Indian Council of Historical Research for giving me a short-term fellowship for six months which greatly helped me to complete the work.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my sincere gratitude to the librarian and other members of the staff of the India Council of World Affairs Library at Sapru House, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library at Teen Murti House, C.P.I. Library at Ajoy Bhavan and the National Archives of India.

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# The Evolution of Nehru's Political Ideas

JAWAHARLAL Nehru is widely acclaimed as one of the makers of modern India. He combined in himself, the personalities of an intellectual as well as of a practical political leader. The role that he played in the long struggle for national freedom had a profound effect on Indian political thinking. Though 'nurtured in a life of sheltered ease and comforts', he threw himself into the nationalist movement and occupied in it a position second only to Gandhi. He belonged to that group of Indian intellectuals who drew their inspiration mainly from the intellectual currents of 19th and 20th centuries. Although he had absorbed, in the early part of his career, many of the ideas and impulses of modern democratic thought, "in his later years, he acquired a deeper appreciation of Indian history and philosophy and enriched the basis for subsequent thought and action."<sup>1</sup>

Nehru had a long span of public life lasting more than forty-five years. There were many distinct phases in the evolution of his political ideas. After, about seven years of his education in England, Nehru returned to India in 1912 when the national political scene was on a low profile. "The Congress", as Nehru himself described, "was a moderate group, meeting annually, passing some feeble resolutions, and attracting little attention."<sup>2</sup> The Bankipore Congress which he attended that year, as a delegate, was essentially a social gathering of well-dressed, English-knowing rich people. He was not inspired by the politics of the moderate group, although his father was a vocal supporter of that group. He felt that individual and national self-respect demanded a more rebellious attitude

<sup>1</sup> Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1955 reprinted), p. 27.

to foreign rule. He had admiration for Gokhale's Servants of India Society, but had no desire to join it. For him, politics, in these years "meant aggressive nationalist activity against foreign rule"<sup>3</sup> and the 'Society' offered no scope for it. He remained for some time, as a silent and uneasy spectator.

### NATIONALISM AN EXPRESSION OF PATRIOTISM

Nehru was not active in his public life during the War years although he joined the United Provinces Congress organization as early as 1913. By nature, he was an intense nationalist and an open rebel against authoritarianism. As he disliked the politics of talks, too much submission and appeal to the authorities, he felt naturally sympathetic to the extremist group headed by B.G. Tilak. Of his political moods and thinking during this period, Nehru, observed, "So far as political matters were concerned, I was, if I may say so an Indian nationalist desiring India's freedom, and rather inclined, in the context of Indian politics to the more extreme wing of it, as represented then by Mr. Tilak."<sup>4</sup> This attitude inevitably brought him into conflict with his father who felt that young Nehru was heading towards the violent group of youngmen in Bengal. But he was not inclined to move that way. He had his broad sympathy for the extremist group and its leader—Tilak, who no doubt, appeared to him as an embodiment of militant nationalism. But the aggressive nationalism of Tilak, contained deep religious motivations which Nehru totally disliked. He was under an emotional spell influenced largely by a burning sense of patriotism which prompted him to adopt a more aggressive and fighting attitude against the alien rule. He felt "that both individual and national honour demanded a more aggressive and fighting attitude to foreign rule."<sup>5</sup> Nehru's critical remark about his father's political attitude as "immoderately moderate"<sup>6</sup> revealed that bent of mind. His political convictions had not yet crystallised. His intense national spirit was the sole motive of all his decisions and actions.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30,

<sup>4</sup>(Interview with the author) Michael Breacher, *Nehru...A Political Biography*, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru to Motilal, 20 December 1907, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. I, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), p. 19.

His demand for a more open and aggressive political actions against the foreign domination was a purely psychological urge which he continued to express even after Gandhi emerged on the political scene. In other words Nehru's reaction to early Indian politics was emotional. "The initial urge came to me, I suppose, through pride, both individual and national, and the desire, common to all men, to resist another's domination and to have freedom to live the life of our choice."<sup>7</sup>

### A CONCEPT OF BROADBASED NATIONALISM

Nehru, being an intense nationalist, had a clear understanding of the distinctive features of nationalism. Nationalism, particularly as it existed in the colonial society, was both a composite and a living force and it could make the strongest appeal to the spirit of man. He was conscious of its merits and of its many contributions to the development of modern civilization. It had all along been a driving force for freedom and independence. It gave a certain degree of unity, vigour and vitality to many peoples all over the world.<sup>8</sup> But he was aware of its limitations too. He believed that nationalism would be a curse, if it was narrow and fanatical. It could, sometimes, make people think only of themselves, of their struggles, of their own misery—and create a fear and suspicion about neighbours. Nationalism would be harmful, if it ever made the people conscious of their own superiority. It would be most undesirable if the spirit of nationalism pushed up any people towards aggressive expansionism. Nehru realised that nationalism of the French Revolution showed that very evil.<sup>9</sup> It was, therefore, necessary that nationalism must remain limited, liberalised and balanced. It should not be allowed to reach a stage where hatred and suspicion of other people were generated.

Indian nationalism, unlike Western nationalism, was not a product of violence and hatred. Almost thirty years after the great Mutiny, it found its expression in the form of Indian National

<sup>7</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: Signet Press, 1946), p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> Willard Range, *Jawaharlal Nehru's World View: A Theory of International Relations* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1961), p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

Congress, and it began to grow and develop since then, in a liberal and tolerant atmosphere.<sup>14</sup> Commenting on Indian nationalism, Nehru wrote in his autobiography:

Nationalism is essentially an antiselfing and it feeds and fattens on hatred and anger against other national groups....

There was certainly this hatred and anger in India in 1921 against the British, but in comparison with other countries, similarly situated, it was extraordinarily little.<sup>15</sup>

When the Fascist type of nationalism raised its head in Europe, Nehru lost no time to completely differentiate it with Indian nationalism. "Nationalism in the East", Nehru observed in 1936, "it must be remembered, was essentially different from the new and terribly narrow nationalism of the Fascist countries; the former was the historical urge to freedom, the latter, the last refuge of reaction."<sup>16</sup> From its inception, Indian nationalism, proceeded from a wider base because of its root in the universal virtues of 'pacifism, liberalism and rationalism'. Nehru had a clear perception of these fundamental characteristics of Indian nationalism before he plunged deeply into the struggle and worked vigorously for national liberation.

Nehru's urge for political action made him a constructive critic of the National Congress. Most of its then leaders failed to make any breakthrough with regard to its strategy and tactics. He felt that the leadership was so weak and unimaginative that it could hardly think of revolutionary action in a situation which demanded radical approach and planning. He had absolutely no liking for terrorism and constitutionalism, the two prevailing methods of political action. The first was quite inconsistent with his nature while the second offered no hope of success. It was in this background that Gandhi arrived on the political scene and started his satyagraha movement, "a novel and untested, but potentially

<sup>14</sup>For further details about Indian Nationalism, see Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Psychology of Indian Nationalism", *Review of Nations* (Geneva), vol. 1, no. 1, January 1927, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2 (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1972), p. 265.

<sup>15</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>16</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *Presidential Address to the National Congress, India and the World* (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1936), p. 70.

capable of breaking the deadlock and achieving the desired results."<sup>12</sup> Inspired by Gandhi and his novel method of action, Nehru first took his plunge in 1919 by defying the Rowlatt Act and other repressive measures. His intense nationalism, thus pushed him forward to a more purposeful and effective political action.

### BEGINNING OF THE AWARENESS OF ECONOMIC ISSUES

The year 1920 was marked by a significant shift in his political and social outlook. His first direct contact with the Indian peasants in that years gave him an insight into their living conditions. Until then his activities were largely confined to the cities. He had never stayed in a village before, nor had any intimate knowledge about the labour conditions in fields or factories. "In 1920, I was totally ignorant of labour conditions in factories or fields, and my political outlook was entirely bourgeois."<sup>13</sup> His visit to the villages and the personal experience with the peasant folk gave him an insight into the real India. "That visit was a revolution to me"<sup>14</sup>, he wrote later. Nehru felt visibly moved by their miserable condition of life. There he patiently listened to their tales of woes, of oppression and inhuman treatment at the hands of the landlords, talukdars and moneylenders.

Looking at them and their misery and overflowing gratitude, I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easy going and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city which ignored this vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India. ... Their faith in us...embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me.<sup>15</sup>

Nehru began to discover the real India in terms of the oppressed masses. The instant sympathy that he developed for them was bound to be a key note of his future political thinking. What

<sup>12</sup> Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>13</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

surprised him most was that the peasant's protest against oppression and exploitation was taking place largely uninfluenced by any political group. The agrarian agitation was entirely independent of the Congress and had no relation with the non-cooperation that was taking shape.

Nehru had at that stage, no clear idea of peasant participation in politics. His entanglement with the kisans in the United Province was purely accidental and he had, at that time, no desire to organize any revolutionary peasant movement. On the contrary the whole attitude towards them was one of moderation counselling them to remain quiet and peaceful. However his close contact with the peasantry gave him a psychological satisfaction that he was functioning wholly in an Indian situation with an awareness of the rural problems. "...ever since then my mental picture of India always contains this naked hungry masses ..and the impressions I gathered were indelibly impressed on my mind."<sup>17</sup> It also made him conscious of the weakness of the nationalist movement as it remained almost cut off from the masses. His main effort was, therefore, to strengthen the mass base of the National Congress by enlisting the support of the kisans.

Nehru's concept of freedom at this stage was purely political. He had no clear thinking on social and economic implications of the political struggle for which he sought the cooperation of the kisans. As a matter of fact he had even accepted rather "unthinkingly that economic issues should not binder political activity, and till Swaraj was attained peasants should not complain about their economic disabilities".<sup>18</sup> However in the light of his new experience, he succeeded in establishing a true communion with the masses which subsequently enabled him to assume mass popularity. But, unlike Gandhi, Nehru never tried to identify himself with the masses in dress, habits or mode of living. He neither practised asceticism nor accepted it ever as a social ideal. He was least inclined to come down to the level of the masses and always kept his "separate mental perch."<sup>19</sup> But from the beginning of his direct contact with

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>18</sup>S. Gopal, "The Formative Ideology of Nehru", in K. N. Panikkar (ed.), *National and Left Movements in India* (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1980), p. 5.

<sup>19</sup>Frank Morses, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (New York, Macmillan Co., 1956), p. 70.

the masses, Nehru developed a passion for social justice,<sup>20</sup> and he began to pay his attention to the economic aspect of the political struggle for freedom.

### COMPREHENSION OF THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF IMPERIALISM

Nehru had undergone a gradual change in his ideas and outlook during 1922 to 1926.<sup>21</sup> The change was quite apparent particularly after his return from European tour in 1927. His experience at the Brussels Conferences as well as a continuous process of self-education brought about a radical change in his thinking. Further his close contacts with the European revolutionaries and movements created in him a new awareness of the forces which were shaping the destiny of mankind. His association with the 'League Against Imperialism'<sup>22</sup> in February 1927, and his short visit later to Soviet Union in November 1927, gave him a new perspective on political action. Nehru's anti-imperialist attitude found its full expression at the Brussels Congress held in February 1927. There he stressed the common element in the struggles against imperialism in different parts of the world. Indian nationalist movement, he pointed out, was part of the world wide movement and its serious impact will, therefore, be naturally felt in other countries. Presenting the Indian problem at the inaugural session of the Congress, as a typical case of imperialism, Nehru gave a brief but brilliant account of the imperialist operation in India. "It does not require statistics, facts or figures to convince you", Nehru told the delegates, "that India, in the course of the last few generations has deteriorated terribly and is in such a bad way, that if something drastic is not done to stop this process India may even cease to exist as a nation."<sup>23</sup> How India had been continuously exploited and terrorised by the British, and how the workers and peasants had been systematically crushed in the process, formed the essence of his

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>21</sup> Practically all his speeches during this period indicate the change

<sup>22</sup> Nehru, as the representative of India, was elected as one of five honorary presidents and a member of the Executive Committee

<sup>23</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru's Speech at the Brussels Congress (10 February 1927, AICC File no. G29 (82-A)/1927, part I, pp. 85-89, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library), in S. Gopal (ed.) *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 273-74.

arguments. He drew the attention of the Congress to the naked manner in which British Government steadily pursued their policy of divide and rule, of keeping the feudal princes in power, of supporting rich landlords and promoting an unholy alliance with the Indian capitalists. The imperialists were doing everything in their power, Nehru emphatically stated, to hold on to India. At the end he made an impassioned appeal to all progressive forces to lend their support to the just struggle of the Indian people.<sup>24</sup>

Nehru's anti-imperialism was largely the product of his own understanding of the historical laws of social evolution. His partial acceptance of the Marxist interpretation of history enabled him to examine the facts of history like a scientist. Though he made no deeper analysis, he believed that the dominant class—the class which controlled the means of production—was the ruling class and that the class conflicts in an exploitative and oppressed society could not be avoided. As an intellectual he had diagnosed the social maladies arising out of class antagonism and thoroughly understood the social significance of each one of them. But on the practical side of his Politics, he remained extremely cautious a man.

Personally Nehru had nothing against England or the English people. His resentment was fundamentally against the system which Britain was holding on. Making an impersonal analysis of the forces at work within that system, Nehru said—"I dislike British imperialism, I resent its imposition on India. I dislike the capitalist system; I dislike exceedingly and resent the way India is exploited by the ruling classes of Britain. But I do not hold England or the English people as a whole responsible for this."<sup>25</sup> It was in this background that Nehru insisted on the Congress joining the League Against Imperialism without wholly committing itself to all its programmes. Nehru was clear in his mind that so long as imperialism was not rooted out, mankind would continue to suffer both exploitation and oppression. The goal of the nationalist movement, therefore, shall be the destruction of all imperialism and reconstruction of the society on an altogether new basis. That basis must be socialism. In other words, the national ideal, according to Nehru,

<sup>24</sup>S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru - A Biography (1889-1947)*, Vol. I, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 300.

<sup>25</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit. pp. 418-19.

shall be "the establishment of a cooperative socialist commonwealth and our international ideal, a world federation of socialist states."<sup>14</sup> But it was no easy task to achieve these ideals, Nehru, realised, for it would definitely provoke at least two sets of opponents—the alien rulers and the social reactionaries. His mind was, therefore, now set for the struggle to be intensified against both. "The nationalist movement", Nehru asserted, "had to be uncompromisingly anti-capitalist, anti-feudal, anti-bourgeois and of course anti-imperialist",<sup>15</sup> and its sole objective should be the establishment of a democratic socialist republic in a completely free and independent India.

Nehru's brief visit to Soviet Russia during this period further strengthened his anti-imperialist views. He admired the Soviet leadership for its remarkable achievements in different field though his assessment of the Soviet system had never been uncritical. In that frame of mind there was also an admiration for China. However he was fairly in agreement with Lenin's ideas on imperialism and Soviet Russia's firm anti-imperialist position. "So I turned inevitably with goodwill towards communism", wrote Nehru, "for whatever its faults, it was at least no hypocritical and not imperialistic."<sup>16</sup> Here his approach and outlook seemed to be those of a 'self-conscious radical'.

#### FIRM COMMITMENT TO THE IDEA OF COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE OF THE COUNTRY

In December 1927, when Nehru returned from his European tour, his ability and grasp to analyse the Indian situation was much greater than before. His new radicalism reaffirmed his enthusiasm for more purposeful political action. His effort was now to redefine the concept of Swaraj in terms of complete independence. The content of Swaraj as demanded by the Nationalists remained a vague and insufficient creed and Nehru wanted to remove the ambiguity surrounding it. In his assessment of the political situation, the real strength of the British rule in India lay in the submissive attitude

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address at the Bombay Presidency Youth Conference, Poona, 12 December 1923, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), p. 206.

<sup>15</sup>B.N. Pandit, *Nehru* (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 122-23.

<sup>16</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 163.

of the moderates whose main interest was to Indianise the administration rather than seeking a wholesale change of the system. In one of his forthright criticisms of the Swarajists, Liberals and No-changers, Nehru observed.

The mention of independence frightens them and every effort is made to dissociate oneself from the idea or from its implications. I am afraid, this very tame and constitutional and legal and proper and reasonable activity raises no enthusiasm in me.<sup>29</sup>

He had made up his mind to move in a different direction. His first step was to persuade the Congress for an open commitment to the goal of complete independence. This he did, with a sense of courage and determination, in 1927, in the Madras session of the Congress where he moved the resolution on complete independence. Though the resolution was formally adopted by the Congress, Nehru had to face an unpleasant situation there. He met with stiff resistance and harsh criticism from many a quarter. Gandhi too was not at all happy about the resolution. While replying to his critics, Nehru clarified that there was no conflict between "Independence" and "Swaraj". Owing to certain things which happened in the past, "Swaraj" unfortunately came to signify something short of full freedom. The Madras Resolution only sought to remove this ambiguity. "Independence" did not replace "Swaraj"; it only clarified and removed the latent ambiguity.<sup>30</sup> Apart from the resolution on independence Nehru also moved a bunch of other resolutions on, the war danger and the association with the League Against Imperialism and succeeded in getting them adopted by the Congress. The Congress, thus wore a new look after a turbulent session at Madras and it was the beginning of Nehru's new role in shaping the policy of the organization.

Though the resolution on independence was formally adopted by the Congress, Nehru had his apprehension whether the Congress would follow it in both letter and spirit. The doubt arose partly

<sup>29</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru to A. Ranganayani Iyengar (General Secretary of the Congress), 25 January 1927, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-39.

<sup>30</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Statement on the 'Independence Resolution', *The Tribune*, 27 January 1927, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 3, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

because of the Congress' refusal to incorporate it in the constitution, Nehru, therefore took immediate steps to constitute two organizations 'The Republican League' and the 'Independence for India League'—in pursuance of his objective. The former was mainly intended to work for the establishment of complete national independence while the latter carried on a large scale propaganda for the cause. Presiding over the maiden session of the Republican League, Nehru said:

Since the failure of the non-cooperation movement, the Congress had been drafting to middle class or Baba politics, and was losing support of the masses . It was important for them to form some kind of organization which will prepare the country for a Republic ideal . . .<sup>11</sup>

The 'Independence for India League' was founded with the help of likeminded colleagues<sup>12</sup> to spread the idea of independence and convert all those who had vague ideas of independence. However the fear of consequences out of an open confrontation with the British raj, induced many of the leaders to refrain from giving effect to the resolution of independence.

In the Calcutta session of the Congress, held a year later, Nehru noticed that strenuous attempts were being made by some, to obscure the issue of independence. Fearing a possible pull back of the organization from its earlier position, Nehru at once stepped in and accepted the Secretaryship just "to prevent, as far as I could, the swing back to moderation and to hold on to the independence objective."<sup>13</sup> In his sharply worded rejoinder to all those who still advocated dominion status, Nehru most emphatically stated "If India has a message to give to the world, it is clear that she can do so more effectively as an independent country than as a member of the British group."<sup>14</sup> As a matter of fact the compromise resolu-

<sup>11</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address at the first session of the Republican Congress, *The Hindu*, 29 December 1929, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>12</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose and Srinivasa Iyengar.

<sup>13</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Statement on the Independence Resolution, *The Tribune*, 27 January 1928, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 3, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

tion finally adopted at Calcutta, diluted the stand on independence. However, it pledged the Congress not only to independence at the end of an year, but also to a definite policy of direct action in order to achieve it. In a sense Nehru had the satisfaction that the pressure that he built in the Congress in favour of complete freedom had its positive effect despite the pulls and protests from many of his colleagues. In 1928 he had the distinction of being reelected as the president of the All India Trade Union Congress and in 1929 Nehru presided over the historic session of the Congress held in Lahore. The Congress had all along avoided facing economic issues since its inception. But Nehru for the first time took a short step in that direction exerting his influence as president of the organization in Lahore.

### TOWARDS SOCIALIST IDEAS

It is significant to note that Nehru had not committed himself to any social ideology till then. Nationalism continued to be the cardinal trend of his thought. But in the changed situation, particularly after his twentyone months stay and hectic political activities in Europe, his political vision began to grow and develop with a revolutionary tinge. He felt that political freedom and independence were only steps in the right direction; but "without social freedom and a socialist structure of society and the state, neither the country nor the individual could develop much."<sup>14</sup> Gandhi had already set the pattern, but even in that fixed pattern, Nehru felt, that there was enough scope to change the content and character. His mind was now set on a new idea—the idea of giving an economic content to Swaraj. But Nehru was not prepared to welcome "that Swaraj in which a few rich people benefit, or a few Indians get higher positions and the lot of the crores of peasants and poor people does not improve."<sup>15</sup> He was, thus determined to carry out this new task before him and the next two years were very crucial for him.

Soon after the Madras session of the Congress, Nehru set out on long tours to various parts of the country. It was rather a poli-

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>15</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "On Indian Situation": extracts from a letter to his father published in 'Auf', 2 March 1927, original in Hindi, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. II, op. cit., pp. 297-98.

tical pilgrimage and he addressed several meetings of peasants, workers, youths and political followers. He found the soil quite fertile to plant his new ideas. Wherever he spoke he stressed mainly the twin points of political independence and social freedom, making the former only as a means to the attainment of the latter. "I wanted", he confessed, "to spread the ideology of socialism, especially among Congress workers and the intelligentsia."<sup>13</sup> He was aware that the preparation was mainly an ideological one. The Congress had all along been a purely political and nationalistic organization unused to thinking on other lines. Nehru now wanted to push it to a more radical position, for the Indian struggle, according to him was essentially an economic struggle although it put on a nationalist garb. Thus the ideal that he set before him, the ideal that he made clear to others, was that "national freedom within the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation."<sup>14</sup>

The beginning of Nehru's interest in socialism could be traced to his Cambridge days when the Fabianism of Bernard Shaw and the Webbs attracted him. But this was, as he confessed, purely an academic interest. He was also influenced by the idea of Bertrand Russel and John Maynard Keynes in the sense that he used to regularly attend their lectures although his own university curriculum contained only science and not economics.<sup>15</sup> The vague ideas of socialism thus nurtured during his student days were now being revived and sharpened in the light of the sweeping political, social and economic changes taking place throughout the world.

Nehru was not a pioneer in the field of socialism in India. Some kind of a vague socialist thinking was already part of the political process much before he returned from Europe. Marxian theory was increasingly influencing many individuals and this tendency was further strengthened by the developments in Soviet Russia. The workers' trade union movement and the majority of the Youth Leagues had socialist leanings. In the United Province, Acharya Narendra Deva and Sampurnanand had been moving in a socialist direction although they were members of the Provincial

<sup>13</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op cit., p. 182.

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Whether India?", in *India and the World*, op cit., p. 63.

<sup>15</sup>Frank Morley, *Jawaharlal Nehru - A Biography* (New York : Macmillan, 1959), p. 42.

Congress Committee. This Committee, in 1926, even tried 'to draw up a mild socialist programme' in the province in order to deal with the local agrarian problems.<sup>40</sup> Nehru too had been advocating the cause for some time, but it was entirely at his instance that the Congress committed itself vaguely to the principle of socialism in 1929.<sup>41</sup> But compared to others in the country Nehru was not on the forefront of the socialist movement at that time. "I was backward", he confessed, "and I had only advanced painfully step by step, where many others had gone ahead blazing a trail."<sup>42</sup> However in the Congress, since he occupied a high position, he had the advantage of making his influence felt much more than others. He was also looked upon by the youth of the country as a symbol and hope of their aspirations. Moreover when its association with the masses began to increase, Congress felt more and more compelled to take up economic issues for consideration. As a matter of fact, Nehru continuously kept up his pressure on the organization in favour of socialism and consequently a number of vague socialist resolutions were adopted by the Congress from time to time. But in 1931, the Congress under his influence took a more definite step in that direction by adopting an economic programme at the Karachi session. In fact no other individual did more to build in Congress, an awareness of economic issues than Jawaharlal Nehru.

Socialism was not merely an economic doctrine for him; "it is a vital creed which I hold with all my head and heart."<sup>43</sup> He was convinced that there was no other way of ending the appalling mass

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 137

<sup>41</sup>In May 1929 Nehru persuaded the Congress in its session held at Bombay formally to recognize that the poverty and misery of the Indian people was due not only to foreign exploitation but also to the economic structure of society which required revolutionary change. These revolutionary changes, however were not spelt out.

<sup>42</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., pp. 182-83

<sup>43</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address to the National Congress in 1936, in *India and the World*, op. cit., p. 83. Nehru not only expressed himself in favour of socialism, but also wanted the Congress to become a socialist organization. He said: "I work for Indian independence because the nationalist in me can not tolerate alien domination, I work for it even more because for me it is the inevitable step to social and economic change. I should like the Congress to become a Socialist Organization and to join hands with the other forces in the world who are working for the new civilization." (*Ibid.*, pp. 83-84).

poverty and sufferings in India except through socialism. The new radicalism in him and his determination to work for that cause were largely the outcome of his intimate contact with the European revolutionaries. His association with the League Against Imperialism, as stated earlier, as well as his short trip to Russia further strengthened his conviction. M N. Roy's comment on Nehru's radicalism clearly indicated the same. According to Roy:

From Nehru's close connection with the League against Imperialism, he learned one thing—that the struggle for national liberation of the colonial peoples must take place in the context of the given international situation, that it was part of the unfolding world revolution; and that the object of the latter being socialism, the nationalist movement in the subject countries should somehow be influenced by socialist ideas and ideals.<sup>44</sup>

Though not well versed in a deep study of Marxism, Nehru, at that stage, was emotionally inclined towards it. He had all praise for Soviet Russia and greatly admired the leadership of Lenin. However what precisely appealed to him most was the scientific approach of Marxism. "Russia apart", Nehru admitted, "the theory and philosophy of Marxism lightened up many a dark corner of my mind. History came to have a new meaning for me. The Marxist interpretation threw a flood of light on it."<sup>45</sup> A study of Marx and Lenin enabled him to see history and current affairs in a proper perspective. From that vantage point he looked afresh at the Indian Society and the nationalist movement. It also helped to assess the real character of the movement and the organization that was spearheading it. He did understand that the nationalist movement was neither a peasant nor a proletarian one. It was purely a bourgeois movement whose objective was not for changing the social structure but for winning political freedom. However there were quite a few in it who could think far beyond their surroundings. They stood for drastic socio-economic transformation and were quite enthusiastic about it. This group was actually

<sup>44</sup>M N. Roy, *Jawaharlal Nehru* (Delhi: Radical Democratic Party, 1945), p. 40.

<sup>45</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 362.

fighting an ideological battle within the Congress with the sole aim of persuading others to accept socialism.<sup>44</sup>

Realising that the task ahead was formidable, the first question that Nehru addressed to himself was: Should India take up the question of economic freedom along with her struggle for political freedom? or should it be tackled after independence? His answer was quite emphatic. Since world events were forcing the issue to the front, political freedom could no longer be separated from economic freedom. Hence in all his speeches and writings during this period, Nehru repeatedly stressed the need for Swaraj and Socialism as the joint objectives of the movement. It was his firm conviction that India could not have the one without the other.

#### **NEHRU'S CRITICISM OF THE COMMUNIST'S METHODS**

Nehru's vigorous campaign for socialism continued for long, even after independence. But his concept of socialism remained largely undefined. He possessed a "radical rather than an ideological mind."<sup>45</sup> In fact he had no rigid adherence to any brand of socialism as such. He was solely guided by the practical considerations of Indian society and its concrete situation as appeared before him. His approach to the fundamental question of social transformation was, therefore, extremely cautious. He was aware that the Congress, constituted as it was, was not likely to adopt any revolutionary programme of social action. Had the issue been forced on it, the Congress would have probably split into two or more parts or at least it would have driven away large sections from it. So what he was really striving for was to keep the issue alive by continuously working for it until he was able to win the sympathy and support of a sizable section. Inside the organization he was ready to cooperate even with all those who stood for political independence, even if they did not accept his socialist ideas. He never thought in terms of leaving the Congress or forming any party or group in order to carry out his socialist objective.

However, certain basic questions did pose problems for him in the pursuit of his socialist ideal. How to bring about social changes? How to provide social justice without sacrificing the principle

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>45</sup>S. Gopal, "Formative Ideology of Jawaharlal Nehru", in K.N. Panikkar (ed.), *National and Left Movements in India*, op. cit., p. 8

of individual freedom? It was here, in the choice of method and general approach, Nehru's pragmatism revealed itself more apparently than anywhere else. Unlike the communists, Nehru chose the method of persuasion or peaceful democratic pressures as against the methods of destruction and extermination.<sup>41</sup> He was critical of both the communists and the socialists, who, according to him were largely nurtured on literature dealing with the industrial proletariat. In India nationalism and rural economy constituted the core of the problem and as such it could not be dealt with in terms of industrial proletariat. European socialism had never dealt with such conditions. Nehru realised that the pre war conditions in Russia had some semblance of Indian conditions, but he felt it was absurd for any one to expect, that what happened in Russia could be repeated elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> Nehru was, therefore convinced that "if socialism is to be built in India, it will have to grow out of Indian conditions, and the closest study of these conditions is essential."<sup>43</sup>

Nehru was not a Marxist in the normal sense of the term. However he frankly admitted that the philosophy of communism was of immense help to understand the laws of social development. He was, therefore, inclined to accept much in that philosophy like "its monism and non-duality of mind and matter, the dynamics of matter and the dialectics of continuous change by evolution as well as leap, through action and interaction, cause and effect, thesis, antithesis and synthesis."<sup>44</sup> But it did not give him full satisfaction "nor did it answer all the questions in my mind."<sup>45</sup> In fact his admiration for Marxism as evident in his works *Soviet Russia*, *Glimpses of World History*, *The Autobiography* and *The Discovery of India*, and in numerous speeches was never uncritical or unqualified. Nehru did not subscribe to the Marxian theory of class war and dictatorship of the proletariat. Moreover he was completely opposed to the methods of violence and hatred. He totally disliked

<sup>41</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Basic Approach." A note published in *A.I.C.C. Economic Review* (New Delhi : All India Congress Committee, 15 August 1958), in *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches September 1957—April 1964*, vol. 4 (Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1964), p. 117.

<sup>42</sup>For details see Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 407.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 589.

<sup>44</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

the communist policy of 'ruthless suppression' of political dissent and the 'wholesale regimentation'. Though he confessed that "he did not know much about the fine points of communism", he was critical of its many short comings; "... . . . Communists often irritated me by their dictatorial ways, their aggressive and rather vulgar methods, their habit of denouncing everybody who did not agree with them."<sup>52</sup> Nehru made these remarks while commenting on his experience at the Brussels in 1927. He honestly believed that it was possible to liquidate poverty and ensure a minimum standard of life for all without resorting to any violent over-thrown of the existing order. Even if the conflicts did exist between classes, the best way of liquidating that conflict, according to him, was put an end to it by peaceful methods.<sup>53</sup> Being a close associate of Gandhi, it was quite natural for Nehru to reject hatred and violence. It was his political conviction that India would have to march in the direction of Socialism, but that march would be on different lines, different from a violent overthrow of the existing social order. "Nothing is so foolish", he argued, "as to imagine that exactly the same process takes place in different countries with varying backgrounds."<sup>54</sup> India, therefore, will have to find her own way to socialism which would avoid unnecessary sacrifice and possibility of chaos.

Nehru's political ideas were conditioned by some of the liberal democratic traditions of 19th century. The brand of socialism which he advocated, could be achieved only through democratic process. He believed, rather firmly, that democracy and socialism were not contradictory but complementary to each other. In fact one could not be divorced from the other. His concept of social democracy did not necessarily imply any conflict with individual freedom and civil liberty. "I do not see why under socialism there should not be a great deal of freedom for the individual, indeed for greater

<sup>52</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>53</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Parties in India", speech at Tinchur, 26 December 1955, in *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches* (Delhi Government of India, Publications Division, 1958), vol. 1, pp. 136-37.

<sup>54</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *Where Are We?* (Allahabad and London: Kilabulian, 1939), p. 60.

freedom than the present system gives. . . ."<sup>66</sup> In view of Nehru's tremendous respect for human freedom and equality on the one hand, and his total opposition to authoritarianism and regimentation on the other, and above all his practical considerations arising out of his desire to carry the bulk of the people with the system, he could not possibly accept an ideologically rigid position.

"Nehru was a practical idealist"<sup>67</sup> who repeatedly stated that ideals and principles there must be, but while dealing with the day to day problems one could not rely merely on idealistic principles. His criticism of both capitalism and communism was based on his awareness of their inherent limitations which he obviously wanted to avoid. But to say that Nehru, "throughout his life maintained a half-liberal and half-Marxist position"<sup>68</sup> is to ignore the reality especially in the light of his own policies and programmes, during the long period of his seventeen years premiership. Marxism and liberalism, even in lesser degree do not coexist; they are anti-theoretical to each other. The problem with Nehru was that the intellectual in him found a ready acceptance of the social truths as revealed by Karl Marx. Hence his lip service to some of the fundamental tenets of Marxism.<sup>69</sup> But Nehru, the political man, faced by the condition of a semi-feudal Indian society with all his realistic assessment of the politics of Indian National Congress—an organization of national bourgeoisie, found favour with liberal democracy. In the process an attempt was made to synthesize the best elements of both the systems in the name of democratic socialism or socialistic pattern as he called it later. Also looking at the mass poverty, illiteracy

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>67</sup>Willard Range, *Jawaharlal Nehru's World View, A Theory of International Relations*, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>68</sup>This view is presented by S. Gopal in his "Promotive Ideology of Jawaharlal Nehru", in K. M. Panikkar (ed.), *National and Left Movements in India*, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>69</sup>According to Bipan Chandra, Nehru grew more and more radical during 1933-36, and this was 'his most Marxist Phase'. His commitment to socialism found its full expression during this period. But all his efforts to build up a socialist movement were frustrated in 1936 by the dominant Congress-leadership supported by the Indian Capitalist class who had been quietly working towards a political compromise since the collapse of the civil disobedience movement in 1933. For details, see Bipan Chandra, "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class 1936" *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), vol. X, Special number, nos. 33, 34, 35, August 1973, pp. 1307-11.

and social backwardness in the country, Nehru could not think of any other, except a socialist solution to that gigantic problem. But revolutionary socialism was not feasible nor inevitable because the human values of a free society had to be preserved. So his concept of socialism could be achieved only through a full democratic process, through the consent of a majority.

The task before Nehru was, therefore, to continuously educate the people in the spirit of democratic socialism in order to win them over to that cause. This was, indeed a pragmatic approach—an approach based on political expediency and compromise, rooted more in practical wisdom than in any ideological conviction. Compulsion or conversion was the method before him and his choice was obvious when he said: "I do not want India to be drilled and forced into a certain position, because the costs of such drilling are too great; it is not worthwhile; it is not desirable from my points of view. . . ."<sup>44</sup> In any case freedom and dignity of the individual was well preserved in Nehru's socialism which, if analysed objectively, was nothing but welfare capitalism.

### PLANNING FOR A MIXED ECONOMY

Another significant step, Nehru took to change the face of the Congress in a radical direction was the creation of a consciousness of economic planning. In the late thirties he came to the conclusion that it was no longer necessary nor possible in India to abolish the capitalist system as a whole. All that he wanted was to reform it by gradually introducing some of the basic tenets of socialism until a new economy combining both capitalism and socialism emerged.<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that in the twenties when he bitterly criticised capitalism and held it responsible for all miseries and sufferings of the people, he was in fact, attacking the *laissez faire* capitalism. The growth of capitalism since then, particularly after the Second World War, clearly demonstrated its capacity to exercise some measure of social control over the possessors of wealth and to accommodate some basic principles of socialism. It is also worth

<sup>44</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, Talk to Indian Conciliation Group in London, 4 February 1936, reprinted in *India and the World*, op. cit., p. 259.

<sup>45</sup> Willard Range, *Jawaharlal Nehru's World View: A Theory of International Relations*, op. cit., p. 84.

remembering in this context that Nehru paid rich tributes to capitalism for many of its great achievements particularly in the field of knowledge, science, technology, medicine, sanitation and many other things.<sup>13</sup> Since early forties it became quite apparent that his bitter antagonism to capitalism was being modified. By that time in several countries of the West, "capitalism had been civilized, tamed and toned down, and many of its old evils extirpated by the insistent demand of the masses. . . ."<sup>14</sup> These countries were working vigorously to provide a better life for the masses. Nehru, who was aware of these developments, however continued to stress the importance of socialism for tackling contemporary economic and social problems. But finally he threw himself in favour of a mixed economy as the most suitable, and most practicable, for India. It would be an economy, he asserted, in which socialist principles and ideals will prevail generally, along with a fair share of capitalism. Thus the concept of a welfare state on the basis of a mixed economy in place of a completely socialized society became Nehru's political creed and programme of action.

Much before the advent of freedom, Nehru realized that an economic regeneration was a prerequisite of a progressive modern life and it could not be achieved except through a concerted planning. Insistence on planning for social and economic reconstruction, thus became a cardinal feature of his thought. He was also deeply impressed by the Soviet economic development through planning which, according to him, caught the imagination of the world. "Everybody talks of 'planning' now, and of Five Year and Ten Year and Three Year Plans. The Soviets have put magic into the word."<sup>15</sup> The fact that the Congress was in charge of the administration in many Indian provinces under the Act of 1935, added a new dimension to his ideas on economic planning. Subsequently in 1938 when the Congress decided to set up a "National Planning Committee" with Nehru as its chairman, he boldly accepted that challenging task. He took up the work in all earnestness and constituted a broad based committee enlisting the services not only of the Congressmen but also of scientists, economists, businessmen and industrialists. But its work was interrupted when the war broke

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>15</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's letter to Indira, 9 July 1933, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 287

out and Nehru was arrested and imprisoned. But the statement of objective made by Nehru as chairman of Planning Committee became a significant factor on the literature of economic planning in India.

To Nehru planning was a necessary ingredient of a socialist economy in a democratic structure. However he had no intention to frighten away any section of the people by stressing the socialist aspect. He, therefore chose to remain vague and imprecise while formulating the aim of planning. "The ideal of the Congress is the establishment of a free and democratic state in India. Such a free democratic state involves an egalitarian society in which equal opportunities are provided for every member for self-expression and self-fulfilment, and an adequate minimum of a civilized standard of life is assured to each member so as to make the attainment of this equal opportunity a reality. This should be the background or foundation of our plan."<sup>44</sup> Nehru became more and more forthright in his views. His idea, at that stage was to take advantage of the Congress resolutions of 1929 and 1931; the former pleading for revolutionary socio-economic changes and the latter demanding state control over the key industries and services.

Nehru's concept of planning was not based on any dogmatic or doctrinaire considerations. He was guided more by the desire for quick results than by any ideological adherence. His only interest was to put the people on the road of steady economic and social progress. "I do not care what ism it is that helps me to set them on that road, if one thing fails, we will try another."<sup>45</sup> It was this practical and flexible attitude that led him to believe that a mixed economy was the most suitable for India. Consistent with his ideas about socialism, here too on the question of planning Nehru thus adopted a pragmatic approach. Had his approach been rigid, the Planning Committee itself would have split creating conflict and bitterness. Constituted as they were, it was not easy for all of them to agree to any basic social policy or principles underlying social organization. There was also difference in approach between those

<sup>44</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru; Memorandum to National Planning Committee, 4 June 1939. In S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976), pp. 377-78.

<sup>45</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Speech in Delhi, 5 March 1949 *Independence And After*, p. 191, quoted in D. E. Smith, *Nehru and Democracy—The Political Thought of An Asian Democrat* (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1958), p. 121.

who favoured a rapid growth of industry and those who stood for the development of village and cottage industries.

Nehru's concept of a mixed economy involved the recognition of public and private sector's participation in the developmental activities. Key sectors of the economy were to be wholly under state control while the private sector operated in other spheres. But the private sector must be subject to state control so as to make it function within the objective of the national plan. While commenting on the role of the private sector, Nehru observed, "The control over the private sector will relate not only to its dividends and profits but will extend to all the strategic points in the economy of the country."<sup>67</sup> Within the broad framework of the national plan private enterprise was to receive sufficient encouragement to operate in many fields. This was clear when he argued that "I think in present day India, it should encourage private enterprise in many fields, though even that private enterprise must necessarily fit in with the national plan and have much controls as are considered necessary."<sup>68</sup> He envisaged more and more state control over the private sector gradually as the years passed on making the mixed economy sufficiently capable of adapting itself to changing conditions.

Nehru's arguments in favour of a mixed economy might sound logical if not convincing. According to him the choice before the country was between the socialist and capitalist systems of economy. But in view of the serious shortcoming inherent in each of the two, he was not prepared to exercise the choice. Nehru argued:

Western economics though helpful, have little bearing on our present day problems. So also have Marxist economics which are in many ways out of date even though they throw a considerable light on economic progress. We have thus to do our own thinking, profiting by the example of others, but essentially trying to find a path for ourselves suited to our own conditions.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Economic Democracy", speech in the House of the People 15 December 1952, in *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches (1949-53)*, (Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1957 Second Impression), p. 97.

<sup>68</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Basic Approach", in A B. Shah (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru - A Critical Tribute* (Bombay: Manak Talas, 1965), p. 124.

<sup>69</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Basic Approach" -A note published in AICC, *Economic Review* (New Delhi), 15 August 1958, in *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches*,

Thus it was unwise, according to Nehru, for India to imitate any economic model from other countries. India must evolve a system which suited her own requirements and genius. The ideal of mixed economy was thus considered to be the best. Nehru was quite emphatic about this when he declared:

(economic) change will have to be in the direction of a democratically planned collectivism... A democratic collectivism need not mean an abolition of private property, but it will mean the public ownership of the basic and major industries. ...In India especially it will be necessary to have in addition to the big industries, cooperatively controlled small and village industries. Such a system of democratic collectivism will need careful and continuous planning and adaptation to the changing needs of the people.<sup>18</sup>

But the truth of the situation in India, even after planning and economic development for about a decade and a half, was that the problem of mass poverty could not be liquidated. In spite of his best efforts through planning, a certain minimum standard of living is still a far cry for a sizable section of the community. The alarming growth of private capital, and the colossal waste of national resources resulting from misplaced national priorities in planning—all have contributed to the ever widening gap between the rich and the poor. But still planning is indispensable, for it promotes the interests of the national bourgeoisie who continue to appropriate the benefits of the socalled economic development.

#### **NEHRU'S LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC IDEAS**

Jawaharlal Nehru was the greatest champion of liberal democracy in India. Throughout his life he stressed the importance of democracy and passionately desired that free India went along the full democratic process. More than any other nationalist leader, Nehru passionately loved freedom and democracy. He had grown up since childhood in the Western democratic traditions and his

September 1957 to April 1973, vol. 4 (Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1964), p. 123.

<sup>18</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op.cit., pp. 635-36.

sensitive mind had absorbed many of the dominant concepts of modern democratic thought. He had extensive reading of the major works of many outstanding Western political thinkers and in his books he often referred to Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*. In fact the intellectual and social influence of the West to a large extent, appeared to have moulded his liberal democratic ideas. This he confessed when he wrote, "My roots are still perhaps partly in the 19th century and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely."<sup>21</sup>

Nehru's concept of democracy had certain specific implications. In the early years of the struggle for independence, democracy meant the ideal of self rule or responsible government. Later his socialist ideas altered his views on democracy stressing more of its economic aspect. In its ultimate analysis democracy implied a mental approach applied to political and economic problems. Democracy in its broad sense, emphasised equality of opportunity to all in the political and economic field and freedom for the individual to grow and develop to the best of his personality. It also involved a high degree of tolerance and a certain inquisitive search for truth. Democracy was thus a dynamic concept for Nehru.<sup>22</sup>

### NEHRU'S VIEWS ON INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

Nehru attached tremendous value to individual freedom. He firmly believed that the creative and adventurous spirit of man could grow only in an atmosphere of freedom. To promote and preserve the values of human life, both society and individual must enjoy freedom. The purpose of a democratic society was essentially to provide necessary conditions of creative development. Explaining the reasons for accepting the democratic process in India, Nehru observed:

It is not enough for us merely to produce the material goods of the world. We do want high standard of living, but not at the cost of man's creative spirit, his creative energy, his spirit of adventure, not at the cost of all fine things of life which

<sup>21</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 591.

<sup>22</sup>D.E. Smith, *Nehru and Democracy—The Political Thought of an Asian Democrat*, op. cit., p. 44.

have ennobled man throughout the ages. Democracy is not merely a question of elections.<sup>23</sup>

As a democrat, Nehru believed in the primacy of the individual. No state should try to suppress the individual. To him state was always a means to an end, and not an end in itself. In the organic set up, he believed, that every individual was a part of the whole having a definite role to play so as to promote the common good. Nehru was keenly aware of the correlation between freedom and progress of a society. Science, for example, could develop only when the scientists worked in an environment of freedom. No progress could be attained by man or society, if man's creative abilities were to remain suppressed.<sup>24</sup> His concept of individual freedom necessarily implied freedom of speech, and expression, of association and many other fields of human activities. The general health of a society, Nehru believed, was largely determined by the freedom of its people. Freedom of expression was absolutely essential for the orderly progress of any society. Free exchange of ideas, he regarded, as the only civilized method of resolving differences.

#### **NEHRU'S VIEWS ON REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT**

Popular sovereignty through representative institutions was to be the essence of his democratic thought. The doctrine of majority rule with the rights to the minority was the necessary conditions of a democratic polity. The doctrine of popular sovereignty, according to him, was not alien to Indian traditions. In fact democratic institutions existed in ancient India and "the ancient practices provided historical precedents for the development of modern democracy in India."<sup>25</sup>

In liberal democracy a wider political participation is ensured by the system of universal adult franchise. Realising the importance of mass participation in the political life, Nehru, in early twenties, repeatedly demanded the setting up of a Constituent

<sup>23</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Away From Acquisitive Society", Speech to A.I.C.C.C., Indore' 4 January 1957, in Jawaharlal Nehru Speeches (March 1953–August 1957), vol. 3. (Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1958), p. 53.

<sup>24</sup>D. E. Smith, *Nehru and Democracy—The Political Thoughts of an Asian Democrat*, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid

Assembly based on adult franchise. The idea behind this demand was to provide equal political opportunities to all, despite the fact of other social inequalities among them. He was in favour of the widest possible franchise without any property or educational qualifications attached to it. He was highly critical of the 19th century liberals who believed that equal political rights for the people 'would eventually pave the way for equality in other matters. However he conceded that political equality was the basis on which other equalities could be secured. "And so, Nehru set his face against any doctrine of elitism in limiting or restricting Indian democracy."<sup>14</sup>

Nehru realised that representative government required responsible political parties as well as leadership for its success. He admitted that the problem of leadership was a complex one, but with an ability to show due regards for truth and morality, the problem could be solved to a large extent.

### HIS IDEAS ON EQUALITY

In Nehru's democratic thought, there was an integrated conception of political, economic and social freedom which could not be separated from one another. There could be no political or economic democracy without social freedom.<sup>15</sup> Realising that the danger to democracy lay essentially in the economic structure of society, Nehru pointed out that democracy could grow and flourish only in an equal society. A serious weakness of Western democracy, according to him, was that political power there became the monopoly of the upper classes. The political structure, which was expected to be built upon the principle of equality was not found to be in existence anywhere. The democratic machinery was often exploited to perpetuate class privileges and interests. Nehru's bitter criticism of 19th century capitalism was based on the fact that liberal democracy in the West miserably failed to solve the problem of economic inequality.

"The spirit of the age is in favour of equality though practice denies it almost everywhere."<sup>16</sup>, said Nehru, explaining the demo-

<sup>14</sup>P. N. Haksar, *Premotiations* (Bombay: Interpress, 1979), p. 23 (Nehru Memorial Lecture).

<sup>15</sup>D. E. Smith, *Nehru and Democracy—The Political Thought of an Asian Democrat*, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>16</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., pp. 634.

cratic principles of equality in the Indian context. The doctrine of equality necessarily meant equal opportunities for all. It presupposed a certain faith in and respect for humanity as a whole, and a belief that the progress and well-being of individuals, groups or races mainly depended upon the enjoyment of equal opportunities by all. It also meant a realization that backwardness of social disabilities were not at all inherent, but were the creation of exploitation and oppression, as well as denial of opportunities for growth. Nehru, therefore, pleaded strongly for all-out effort to provide equal opportunities which would realise millions from their social bondage.<sup>19</sup>

One of the reasons for Nehru's fascination for democracy as against authoritarianism was that the former was based on rationalism while the latter relied on dogmatism. Free discussion and an inquisitive search for truth, which found no place in authoritarianism, constituted the essence of democratic theory. Nehru had tremendous faith in the spirit of man. The dismal failures of mankind never depressed him. Being a liberal by taste and temperament, he believed in the potentiality of human reason and man's tremendous capacity for survival. However he was very clear about his social objective and that was the establishment of an economic democracy, which, in his phraseology was to be a socialist pattern of society. Such a society was to be an cooperative effort providing equal opportunity for all.<sup>20</sup> It is, however significant to note that when Nehru defined democracy in terms of individual freedom or popular government, or social self-discipline, he was speaking of actual realities. When he defined democracy in terms of economic and social equality, he was speaking of an ideal, a distant goal to be achieved in due course.<sup>21</sup>

Equally important an aspect of Nehru's democratic thought was the idea of social self-discipline which implied peace and tolerance. Tolerance here meant the will to recognise the existence of differing views and "to allow the strongest view to prevail, according to established procedures."<sup>22</sup> It was also his firm belief that social

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 635

<sup>20</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's Broadcast, 13 December 1952, "Building New India", All India Congress Committee, New Delhi, 1954, p. 53.

<sup>21</sup>D. E. Smith, *Nehru and Democracy—The Political Thought of an Asian Democrat*, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 54.

and political objectives must be sought only by non-violent methods. Nehru frequently referred to the Gandhian doctrine of ends and means, and obviously he appeared to be under its impact when he stressed the importance of social self-discipline. If democracy was to ensure individual freedom, Nehru held, then that freedom was to be considered in the larger context of social equality.

### NEHRU'S SCIENTIFIC TEMPER

Jawaharlal Nehru was the first amongst the nationalist leaders to recognise the importance of science and technology for modernization of the Indian society. For many educated Indians, Nehru represented the desire to be modern and scientific in one's outlook. To him, science formed the very texture of life—without which the modern world would have found it difficult to survive. Science, being the dominant factor in modern life, Nehru keenly desired that the social system and economic structure must fit in with science. Science brought in mighty and fundamental changes in many fields. But the most vital of all changes, was the development of the scientific outlook in man. Together with the scientific method, the new outlook of man, alone could offer to mankind, hope and expectation of a good life and an ending of the agony of the world, Nehru argued. Nehru was aware of the difficulties inherent "in nurturing science and technology in a society where thought processes were governed by traditional mores."<sup>33</sup> He was never tired of speaking about the scientific temper or of fighting irrationality.

Addressing the Indian Science Congress in the late thirties, Nehru stated:

Politics led me to economics and this led me inevitably to science, and the scientific approach to all our problems and to life itself. It was science alone that could solve these problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening customs and traditions, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup>P.N. Haksar, *Premnagar*, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>34</sup>J.S. Bright (ed.), *Before And After Independence* (A collection of most important speeches delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru 1922-1950, vol. 1 and 2 (New Delhi: Indian Printing Works, n.d.), p. 292.

## SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Nehru wrote in his *Discovery of India* that his early approach to the problems of life had been more or less scientific with something of the easy optimism of the science of the 19th and 20th century. He had no attraction towards any religion for it seemed to be closely associated with superstition and dogmatism. Behind every religion lay a method of approach which was wholly unscientific. Yet he recognised that religion provided some kind of a satisfaction to the inner needs of human nature and gave a set of moral and ethical values to life in general. But what actually excited him were the problems of man. "problems of individual and social life, of harmonious living, of a proper balancing of an individual's inner and outer life, of an adjustment of the relations between individuals, and between groups, of a continuous becoming something better and higher, of social development, of the ceaseless adventure of man."<sup>11</sup> In the solution of these problems, Nehru wanted to follow deliberate reasoning and precise knowledge based on scientific method. He had no patience to argue with any one who confined himself to the finer points of any rigid doctrine.<sup>12</sup> Science was, therefore, much preferable to religion, Nehru argued, because, science did not dogmatise. It did not require acceptance on faith or obedience to authority. Instead it called for doubt and questioning as well as rational investigation.

### SCIENCE FOR MODERNIZATION

In the long course of human history, Nehru observed, science 'revolutionised' the conditions of human life more than anything else. Man secured considerable relief from the burden of miseries by the application of science and scientific approach. The conquest of the physical world by the mind of man was so remarkable that nature was no longer looked upon as something apart or distinct from himself.<sup>13</sup> But science must have a social objective apart from

<sup>11</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 20

<sup>12</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru criticised the Leftist groups in India on the ground that the latter spent much of their energy in mutual conflict and recrimination over fine points of doctrine.

<sup>13</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Basic Approach*, A note published in AIIC, *Economic Review* (New Delhi), 15 August 1958, in Jawaharlal Nehru's *Speeches, September 1957—April 1963*, vol 4, p. 114.

being an individual's search for truth and knowledge. The objective, according to Nehru, should be to remove the ills of the community. In a country like India, science must think in terms of the suffering millions.<sup>14</sup>

It was one of his basic assumption to promote a new civilization with a new social and economic order. He wanted a civilization in which men remained throughout their life, critical and adventurous in their thinking, men who never accepted things without testing and trial; men who were insatiable in their quest for knowledge. What he really insisted upon was the scientific approach be accepted as a way of life and as a process of thinking,<sup>15</sup> and as a method of adjusting social relations. In all these Nehru's appeals were for rationalism and scientism.

He had been arguing since early thirties that the *laissez-faire* capitalist system, the colonial system and the feudalistic systems prevalent in Asia, Africa and Latin America and much of the contemporary civilization was out of date and no longer suited to the present day conditions. He repeatedly drew attention to the paradox of the age and pointed out that the political, economic and social systems, operating in many parts of the world were not designed to solve the global problems of poverty, misery and exploitation. Yet he insisted that the whole structure of India needed to be revolutionised. He did not find favour with those who stood only for political freedom. To him the aim of the whole nationalist movement was to reorganise the Indian society economically, socially, psychologically, spiritually and not just politically.

### HIS DEMAND FOR MODERNIZATION

One of the most striking characteristics of Western civilization, according to Nehru, was its rationalism and scientism. By virtue of these, the Western mind was able to free itself from 'unreason, magic and superstition' since the latter part of the 18th century. Rationalism and scientism appeared to have a profound impact on

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address at the 34th Indian Science Congress (Delhi, 3 January 1947) in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 1, Second Series (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Teen Murti House, 1984), p. 372.

<sup>15</sup>Willard Range, *Jawaharlal Nehru's World View A Theory of International Relations*, op. cit., p. 20.

Nehru's thinking. His demand for them was, however, based on his conviction that India must break with much of her past and not allow the past to dominate the present. In other words India must get out of her traditional ways of thought and action.

Nehru insisted that a scientific approach be accepted as the guiding principle of life, and as a process of thinking regarding problems, "For we have to build India on a scientific foundation to develop her industries, to change that feudal character of her land system, and bring her agriculture in line with modern methods to develop the social services which she lacks so utterly today."<sup>13</sup> National progress lay, Nehru asserted, neither in a repetition of the past nor in its denial. New patterns must be developed and integrated with the old. This was all the more necessary for India, argued Nehru, because, instead of relying on the present, India had heavily depended upon the past. She must get out of her obsession 'with the supernatural and metaphysical speculations.' Religious ceremonial and mystical emotionalism, not only crippled the mental discipline in India, but also stood in the way of understanding ourselves and the world at large.<sup>14</sup> People in India shall have to come to grips with the present, Nehru demanded, because there was only one way traffic in time and progress. "India must therefore lessen her religiosity and turn to science. She must get rid of her exclusiveness in thought and social habit which has become like a prison to her, stunting her spirit and preventing growth."<sup>15</sup> Nurturing science was a delicate process, and that too in the socio-cultural environment of a traditional India. He was aware of these difficulties and so he gave his personal attention and passionate concern to the development of science and technology.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup>J.S. Bright (ed.), *Before and After Independence*, vol. 1 and 2, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, *op. cit.*, p. 631.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>16</sup>It is interesting as well as informative to know how Nehru chose his men carefully and how he sought their counsel and advice. Lord Blackett was one of his counsellors on science and technology. The credit for the scientific and technological development in India in such a short period of time entirely goes to Jawaharlal Nehru. India, has established her competence in the field of designing and commissioning large industrial plants and machinery in some sophisticated fields. It is far ahead of many other countries in its space programme. A number of National Scientific Research Laboratories were set up to push up the study and research in advance technology, engineering and science. All this constitutes a tremendous national effort and its solid foundation was laid by Jawaharlal Nehru.

### NEHRU'S SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM

Nehru seemed to have a profound sense of history and deep respect for India's heritage. He wanted the Indian people to free themselves from the shackles of the past. At the same time he urged upon them to recondition their mind equipping themselves with the problems of the present and perspective on future. This, according to him, was possible only when the people tried to imbibe the highest ideals of the present age—humanism and scientific spirit. Despite an apparent conflict between the two, there was "a growing synthesis between humanism and scientific spirit, resulting in a kind of scientific humanism."<sup>44</sup> What Nehru wrote in the last chapter of *The Discovery of India*, probably revealed much of his own mind. There he stated:

The modern mind, that is to say, the better type of the modern mind, is practical and pragmatic, ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian. It is governed by a practical idealism for social betterment. ... It has discarded to a large extent the philosophic approach of the ancients, their search for ultimate reality, as well as the devotionalism and mysticism of the medieval period. Humanity is its god and social service, its religion.<sup>45</sup>

Possessed of a scientific and rational temper, Nehru always looked upon science as an effective instrument for the liberation of man.

### NEHRU'S SECULARISM AS A BASIS OF INDIAN POLITICS

It was essentially due to the effort of Jawaharlal Nehru that India emerged as a secular state in the mid-twentieth century. He played a significant role, much before independence, to develop a secular foundation for Indian politics. For him, secularism was an essential social ideal to be promoted in the interest of national unity and progress. He used every single opportunity available to him to impress on the people, the danger of allying religion with politics. The error of combining and confusing religion with politics in the shape of communalism, could threaten the very existence

<sup>44</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 681.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 680.

of a society, Nehru asserted.

Secularism, being a social ideal found its expression officially for the first time, in the resolution drafted by Nehru on "Fundamental Rights and Duties" which was passed by the Karachib Congress in August 1931. Clause 1(ix) of the Resolution read—"The State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions."<sup>11</sup> The secular state did not in any sense imply that religion ceased to be significant in the life of the individual. It only meant the separation of the state from religion—a cardinal principle of modern democratic practice. Nehru was vehemently opposed to the idea of a theocratic state which, in his view, was both medieval and anti-democratic in character and had no place in the mind of a modern individual. He held that state, being the highest of all social institutions, must be separated from religion. Secularism necessarily implied that the principal concern of the state should be the individual and his wellbeing rather than his religion. Therefore, no individual should be subjected to any social disabilities imposed by religious sanctions. Secularism also emphasised the enjoyment of equal rights by all citizens irrespective of religion.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout his life, Nehru repeatedly stressed the importance of a secular polity as the vital instrument of modern democratic practice. The necessity for a secular approach to Indian politics was intensely felt not merely as a response to modern democratic demands, but also out of certain practical considerations. Both Gandhi and Nehru realised the gravity of communalism which had already crept into the country's politics, and communal organizations were making their desperate bid to influence the people. The communal riots, which broke out often in different places, rarely ended without bloodshed and sufferings. Mutual distrust and lack of confidence between the majority and minority communities were becoming a most disturbing factor in the national politics. In fact the progress of the nationalist movement itself was often hampered by the frequent communal outbursts. The sectional and communal approach of politics was further strengthened with the introduction of communal electorate by the British Government. Both Gandhi and Nehru bitterly fought against the system of communal electorate.

<sup>11</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India—Collected Writings 1937-40* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1948 Third impression), p. 406.

<sup>12</sup> D. E. Smith, *Nehru and Democracy—The Political Thought of an Asian Democrat*, op. cit., p. 153.

They spared no effort to maintain communal harmony, which according to them, was a vital necessity of Indian political life.

Nehru favoured a strong secular base for the state primarily for the maintenance of social stability and religious harmony among diverse groups. Being a practical political thinker, it was his firm conviction that a secular state also could serve better, a community divided by diverse religious faiths. With the state pledged to a secular way of life, the constitution of India guaranteed the right to freedom of religion as a fundamental right. Nehru was specially interested in the enumeration of the Directive Principles of State Policy which suggested the creation of a uniform civil code for all in India. In order to maintain national unity and thereby to ensure orderly progress in a plural society like India, secularism was considered to be a vital necessity. Nehru's achievement in this direction was most praise-worthy and was acclaimed even by his critics.

### INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

One of Nehru's significant contributions to the Indian National Congress was the fostering of an international outlook. Long before independence, Nehru realised that national isolation was neither desirable nor possible in a world which was fast changing and becoming more of a unit. He had a deep sense of history. What he could observe in history, apart from man's persistent struggle for a living, was the strong urge in man to come together, to cooperate and work out their problems in common. It was from that cooperation, Nehru felt, that man was able to progress from barbarism to civilization. Nations were growing more and more independent and none could go against that historical tendency. India, therefore, Nehru argued "must be prepared to discard her narrow nationalism in favour of world cooperation and real internationalism."<sup>11</sup>

With all its intense nationalism, the Indian National Congress was for long engrossed in internal politics and paid little attention to international developments. It began to grow international minded and started taking interest in world events only in the early

<sup>11</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Whether India?", in *Recent Essays and Writings* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1934), pp. 23-24.

nineteen twenties. This was entirely under the influence of Nehru. Unlike most of his colleagues in the Congress, Nehru, from the beginning, evinced keen interest in foreign affairs. He had a thorough grasp of the developing international trends and all resolutions on international problems, passed by the Congress, prior to independence were drafted by him. He always carried with him the Congress Working Committee which invariably accepted his advice on international problems. Again it was at the instance of Nehru that Congress developed a foreign policy based on the elimination of political and economic imperialism everywhere and the cooperation of free nations.

A resolution on foreign policy was passed by the Congress in 1920, expressing India's desire to develop friendly relations with all the neighbouring countries and to cooperate with other nations in the world.<sup>101</sup> Later in his report on 'Brussels Congress' Nehru made a positive suggestion to the AICC to set up a special department dealing with foreign affairs. This department, he thought, could keep in touch with the League Against Imperialism as well as with the national and workers organizations outside. Apart from trying to cultivate friendly ties with other countries, Nehru also proposed that it was necessary "to train a body of youngmen with some knowledge of the present world and the forces that were shaping the future."<sup>102</sup> Nehru insisted that the Congress must take cognisance of all international problems and the forces operating on them and must prepare its own policies and programmes in the light of its reading of the situation.

It was in this background that the Congress actually began to develop its foreign policy. In 1927, the Congress declared that India had no interest in an imperialist war, and under no circumstances, India should be made to join any war without the consent of the people. This declaration subsequently became the foundation of Congress policy and it was widely accepted as Indian policy as there was no opposition from any quarter in the country.<sup>103</sup>

Nehru possessed a rare ability to analyse the international situation by placing the national problem in the wider world context. It was he who persuaded the Congress to realise that the

<sup>101</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 501.

<sup>102</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Report on Brussels' Congress", 19 February 1927, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 290-91.

<sup>103</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 501.

Indian struggle for freedom was part of a global struggle and that its strategy and tactics should be such as would fit in the context of world developments. In his presidential address to the Lahore Congress in December 1929, Nehru stressed that point and said:

India today is a part of the world movement. Not only China, Turkey, Persia and Egypt, but also Russia and the countries of the West are taking part in this movement, and India cannot isolate herself from it. . And if India has a message to give to the world, as I hope she has, she has also to receive and learn much from the messages of other peoples.<sup>102</sup>

Nehru possessed an inquisitive mind and was always eager to understand the world history and politics. Personally he welcomed all opportunities and legitimate methods of getting in touch with other countries and peoples. This, according to him, was necessary for "self education and self improvement."<sup>103</sup> A close study of world movements and politics would certainly well equip any one who wanted to serve his country better.

Nehru was the official representative of the Congress to participate in the Brussels Congress against Imperialism. It was on his insistence that the Congress later decided to associate itself with the League Against Imperialism. These were quite important in the sense that his close contact with different people<sup>104</sup> during his stay in Europe, became a turning point in the evolution of his ideas. The great impact of that change began to be felt in the Congress ever since his return from Europe. He was very active in the conference and the resolution moved by him, demanding Indian liberation from foreign domination, received the wholehearted support of the delegates. That resolution also carried a declaration of India's readiness to cooperate with the similar movements for emancipation in other parts of the world.<sup>105</sup> Later a joint declaration by the

<sup>102</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address, Lahore, 29 December 1929, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 4, op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>103</sup>Letter to Gandhi, 22 April 1927, Gandhi-Nehru correspondence, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 326.

<sup>104</sup>The delegates included European Communists, trade unionists and pacifists, nationalists from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

<sup>105</sup>S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography (1889-1947)*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 102.

Indian and Chinese delegations, drafted by Nehru, clearly indicated India's policy towards China which remained almost unchanged for the next three decades. Friendship with China was the core of Nehru's pan-Asian policy. As an active participant, Nehru fully subscribed to the main objective of the Conference which was mainly intended to bring together the forces of anti-colonialism and organized labour against British imperialism.

Nehru believed that Indian nationalism was based on the most intense internationalism and other countries and their peoples could not remain unaffected by it. Those who stood for national independence, he felt, also stood for widest internationalism. "If we claim independence today", Nehru argued, "It is with no desire for isolation; on the contrary we are perfectly willing to surrender part of that independence in common with other countries to a real international order."<sup>104</sup> But the greatest enemy of such an international order, according to him, was imperialism which would make it impossible for world cooperation and world peace.

It should be noted that the demand for dominion status by a section of the Congress leadership was bitterly opposed by Nehru on the ground that it would have led India to isolation and not to a wider international contacts. His vision of Indian nationalism was, thus, much wider than that of many of his contemporaries. Even Gandhi openly recognised that "the credit for preventing the Indian national movement from becoming narrowly egocentric should go to Nehru."<sup>105</sup>

As was expected of him, in his Presidential address, in 1936, Nehru made a brilliant analysis of the Indian problem in the larger context of the then prevailing international situation. There his emphasis was on the two conflicting forces at work—the imperialist—Fascist forces of a decaying capitalism on the one hand, and the progressive forces—socialist and the nationalist on the other. The growing tension between the two was inevitable and the freedom struggle in India was part of the general confrontation against the former. His bitter attack on capitalism was based on the view that capitalism was responsible for the emergence of Fascism. Capitalism and Imperialism, Nehru observed, in their desperate bid to

<sup>104</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 419.

<sup>105</sup>Willard Range, *Jawaharlal Nehru's World View. A Theory of International Relations*, op. cit., p. 42.

save themselves would adopt the ideology of Fascism as a last resort. Capitalism could tolerate democracy only so long as it remained useful to maintain political power and to keep down labour. The moment democracy failed to serve that end, democratic institutions would be scrapped for Fascist methods of violence and terror.<sup>108</sup> Nehru referred to all these in order to stress the need for international cooperation.

India, therefore, could never ignore the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe. In fact, Nehru warned, "India's freedom will not be worth many-days' purchase if Fascism and Marxism dominate the world. Our own existence is bound up with the fate of freedom and democracy in the world. Only a union of freedom-loving peoples and their mutual cooperation can avert the common peril. For that union, India must stand."<sup>109</sup> He was clear in his mind that India's struggle against imperialism was part of the liberal world's fight against Fascism.

Nehru had a greater imagination and perspective on international politics. He was quite enthusiastic about the burning problems confronting the world and wanted India to involve herself significantly in finding solutions. When Italy attacked Ethiopia, he called for protest demonstrations throughout the country. In his presidential address at Lucknow, he urged upon the people to express solidarity with the Ethiopians in their struggle against Mussolini's fascist forces. Similarly Nehru wanted the Jews to come to a settlement with the Arabs on the Palestinian issue, instead of relying on British imperialism. He thought Britain was exploiting the unhappy relations between the Arabs and the Jews.<sup>110</sup>

In Asia Nehru's sympathy was always with China in its fight against Japan. As he was determined to challenge imperialism, he found it necessary to organize the boycott of Japanese goods. He also organised a China relief fund and persuaded the Congress to send to that country a medical unit with men and material for service. But it was the Spanish civil war that disturbed him most. To him the Spanish conflict had a much wider implications in the sense that it was essentially a conflict between the forces of

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>109</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru *The Unity of India*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>110</sup> S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography*, vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

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<sup>164</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 419.

<sup>165</sup>Willard Range, *Jawaharlal Nehru's World View A Theory of International Relations*, op. cit., p. 41.

save themselves would adopt the ideology of Fascism as a last resort. Capitalism could tolerate democracy only so long as it remained useful to maintain political power and to keep down labour. The moment democracy failed to serve that end, democratic institutions would be scrapped for Fascist methods of violence and terror.<sup>108</sup> Nehru referred to all these in order to stress the need for international cooperation.

India, therefore, could never ignore the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe. In fact, Nehru warned, "India's freedom will not be worth many-days' purchase if Fascism and Marxism dominate the world. Our own existence is bound up with the fate of freedom and democracy in the world. Only a union of freedom-loving peoples and their mutual cooperation can avert the common peril. For that union, India must stand."<sup>109</sup> He was clear in his mind that India's struggle against imperialism was part of the liberal world's fight against Fascism.

Nehru had a greater imagination and perspective on international politics. He was quite enthusiastic about the burning problems confronting the world and wanted India to involve herself significantly in finding solutions. When Italy attacked Ethiopia, he called for protest demonstrations throughout the country. In his presidential address at Lucknow, he urged upon the people to express solidarity with the Ethiopians in their struggle against Mussolini's fascist forces. Similarly Nehru wanted the Jews to come to a settlement with the Arabs on the Palestinian issue, instead of relying on British imperialism. He thought Britain was exploiting the unhappy relations between the Arabs and the Jews.<sup>110</sup>

In Asia Nehru's sympathy was always with China in its fight against Japan. As he was determined to challenge imperialism, he found it necessary to organize the boycott of Japanese goods. He also organised a China relief fund and persuaded the Congress to send to that country a medical unit with men and material for service. But it was the Spanish civil war that disturbed him most. To him the Spanish conflict had a much wider implications in the sense that it was essentially a conflict between the forces of

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>109</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru. *The Unity of India*, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>110</sup> S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 232.

progress and those of reaction.<sup>111</sup> The consequences were bound to affect the destiny of many nations.

When the Second World War broke out, the Congress defined its attitude to the war largely upon the lines suggested by Nehru. The resolution adopted by the Working Committee was his handiwork. It said:

In this world crisis, the sympathies of the Working Committee are entirely with the peoples who stand for democracy and freedom, and the Congress has repeatedly condemned Fascist aggression in Europe, Africa and the Far-East of Asia as well as the betrayal of democracy by British imperialism in Czechoslovakia and Spain.<sup>112</sup>

In 1940 Nehru plainly told the Americans that there could be no proper settlement of the world problems unless India and China were included in the settlement and treated as free nations. India, he added, was ready to cooperate, but only on the basis of peace, freedom and democracy.<sup>113</sup>

Time and again, Nehru insisted that the states should maintain a reasonable balance between nationalism and internationalism. Every state should strive for an adjustment of her national interests with those of the other states in order to promote international harmony and cooperation. He probably visualised the emergence of a world federation in which India was to become an active member after independence. But it must be a world republic, asserted Nehru and not an empire for exploitation.<sup>114</sup>

When the new constitution was framed Nehru was keenly interested in incorporating in it, some basic guidelines for the country's foreign policy. This was provided under part IV dealing with the Directive Principles of State Policy, in the enumeration and drafting of which he was specially interested. Apart from many other things the Directive Principles enjoined that the country's

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>112</sup>Quoted in Frank Moraes, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography*, op. cit., p. 276.

<sup>113</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's letter to J. Holmes Smith, 10 January 1940, *A Bunch of Old Letters* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958), p. 412.

<sup>114</sup>Wallard Range, *Jawaharlal Nehru's World View: A Theory of International Relations*, op. cit., p. 54.

foreign policy shall be directed with a view to promote international peace and security. The state should strive for maintaining just and honourable relations between nations, by fostering respect for international law and treaty obligations, and by encouraging the settlement of international disputes by arbitration. In fact the policy of non-alignment initiated by Nehru after independence was mainly aimed at the attainment of the same objective. "It is a great tribute to him that he insisted that India should be non-aligned in the insane struggle for power which has preoccupied the United States and the Soviet Union at the expense of the welfare of mankind."<sup>112</sup>

<sup>112</sup>Bertrand Russell, "The Legacy of Nehru", *Illustrated Weekly of India* (Bombay), 27 May 1984, p. 44. (This article was originally published in the same Weekly in 1964).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **Nehru and Gandhi**

In the political history of modern India Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi have a unique and abiding position. They were the greatest leaders of India's national liberation movement and their thoughts and ideas have become an integral part of the national consciousness. Their emergence on the Indian political scene and the inspiring leadership they provided, brought about qualitative transformation in the character of the nationalist movement. With a rare sense of dedication, they worked together for over a quarter of a century and their political partnership was perhaps the most exciting in the history of Indian nationalism.

The fact that these two men, divided by deep intellectual differences and distinct social outlooks could work together for long is a great puzzle for anyone who makes a serious study of their ideas. It may also appear to be rather strange that young Nehru with all his Western education and aristocratic way of life should have been attracted to Gandhi who was deeply religious and austere in living habits. Yet it was nothing but his keen desire to serve the country that brought him closer to Gandhi whose "novel but untested"<sup>1</sup> method of political action pushed him into the vortex of the great movement.

Nehru felt extremely happy and elated when he joined the movement and worked initially as a Congress campaigner. But before long he came to realise that in spite of a great deal of love and respect for each other, there appeared divergence of views on many questions between him and Gandhi. If in the early years, their differences were largely confined to the objective of the national Congress and the efficacy of the method of nonviolence, later, they disagreed on the content of Swaraj. Despite frequent exchange of ideas, sharp differences persisted between them on the

<sup>1</sup>Michael Brecher, *Nehru—A Political Biography* (London, Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 75.

fundamental problems of industrialisation, planning and economic development. Also on the vital questions of modernisation and changing the structure of property and power as well as on the problem of Indian states, Nehru and Gandhi could seldom agree with each other. They both spoke a great deal of their differences on many occasions, yet they clearly "saw the common foundation which made them comrades-in-arms in the struggle for independence."<sup>2</sup> Personal attachment and national interest never allowed them to drift apart and in practical life they were very near to each other. During the years of his long association, which witnessed, many a time, loud protests and strong outbursts, "Nehru ruthlessly suppressed himself to be loyal to his leader."<sup>3</sup> Gandhi also accepted some of the ideas of his young political partner and openly acknowledged that in his thinking he was "far ahead of his surroundings."<sup>4</sup> In their long and intimate contact with one another, Nehru and Gandhi used to have a repeated and prolonged discussions on all vital matters. Although they failed to convince each other, they certainly influenced each other. The letters and correspondence which they frequently exchanged also revealed not only the temperamental and fundamental differences but also the many things which they had in common.

### NEHRU'S PERCEPTION OF GANDHI

Of all the staunch nationalists Nehru was perhaps the first to realise the commanding position of Gandhi in the country as well as in the Congress. The Congress of pre-independence was a movement represented by a collection of heterogeneous interests. Individuals and groups with diametrically opposite economic and social thinking were all in it. Capitalists and communists, revolutionaries and pacifists—all found a common platform within the Congress because of their common desire for the liberation of the country. Such a patently heterogeneous character of the Congress was largely responsible for its failure to develop

<sup>2</sup>Rostislav Ulyanovsky, *Present-day Problems of Asia and Africa—Theory, Politics, Personalities* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1980), p. 180.

<sup>3</sup>Nirad C. Chaudhuri "Have We Forgotten the Mahatma?", *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (Bombay), 2 October 1983, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup>D G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of Mahatma Karamchand Gandhi*, Vol. 2 (Bombay : Vithal K. Jhaveri & D G. Tendulkar, 1952), p. 490.

a precise ideological base for itself. Yet the Congress evolved a definite viewpoint on social and economic matters and "on the whole this Congress viewpoint represented a compromise between Gandhi and Nehru."<sup>5</sup> More than most of the other nationalists Nehru had a sound perception of Gandhi, his role and leadership in the movement. No one could dispute his explanation of Gandhi's unique position in the Congress. He dominated the Congress because "The Congress of today is of his making, and he is essentially of it."<sup>6</sup> It was he who converted the Congress from a movement of the elites into a movement of the people. While trying to analyse the various elements in the Congress, Nehru recognised the dominant position of Gandhi and it made no difference whether he was formally connected with the Congress or not. His unique personality and the enormous influence that he wielded on the masses made him supreme within the organization and his position had nothing to do with any office. Recognising this as "one of the basic factors of the situation" in the country, Nehru observed "In any policy that might be framed he cannot be ignored. In any national struggle his full association and guidance are essential. India cannot do without him."<sup>7</sup>

Both as a man of charismatic charm and as a man of the masses Gandhi enjoyed an incomparable position in India. All others including Nehru, however much opposed to his viewpoint and however valid and strong their ground for an honest difference of opinion, had to withdraw in favour of his judgment and accept his leadership. This was not because of his superior intellect but because of his mass popularity. Admiring this fascinating aspect of his craftsmanship Nehru wrote in his *Autobiography* "It was remarkable how Gandhiji seemed to cast a spell on all classes and groups of people and drew them into one motley crowd struggling in one direction."<sup>8</sup> Thus it may be argued that Nehru had a more realistic and accurate appreciation of Gandhi's power than others and he knew well that by remaining ever loyal to Gandhi and by compromising on crucial occasions, he was positively serving the national cause.

<sup>5</sup>P D. Kaushik, *The Congress Ideology and Programme 1920-47* (Bombay: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1964), p. 125.

<sup>6</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Where Are We?", in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976), p. 512.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid

### DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Nehru had a unique relationship with Gandhi. He was Gandhi's most critical follower. 'As one who differed from him on many vital matters and yet cooperated with him in large measure,' Nehru had to carry the burden of adjustment till the last moment. In other words the history of his political career during the entire period of his association with Gandhi, was the history of a relentless struggle to reconcile his own ideas of right course of action with those of Gandhi.\*

From the beginning Nehru was quite emphatic on the point that politics should "entirely be based on clarity of thought and reasoning and has no room for vague idealistic or religious or sentimental process which confuse and besog the mind".<sup>11</sup> His was an intellectual and rational approach to politics and he wanted to consider all issues and problems on a scientific basis. Gandhi, on the contrary attached little importance to the intellectual approach to the problems of life. He was essentially a man of action, guided solely by the considerations of practical life. He was not much enthusiastic about the acquisition of theoretical knowledge or scholarly attainments. But "he certainly evolved his concepts and elaborated them in the context of practical problems that he faced as a politician and social worker."<sup>12</sup> He was content to act in a given situation in the light of his basic moral principles. His thoughts and ideas might be deficient in the art of logic and reasoning, but always contained the basic unity of purpose and aim. The ideas were the expressions of his creative mind. They were the products of his direct contact with life and the practical experience gained thereby. He was least interested in the develop-

\*Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1955), p. 75.

<sup>11</sup>Gandhi was aware of the big strain on Nehru. In his letter of 17 January 1928, to Nehru, Gandhi wrote: "Whilst you were heroically suppressing yourself for the sake of the nation and in the belief that by working with and under me in spite of yourself, you would serve the nation and come out scatheless, you were chafing under the burden of this unnatural self-suppression". *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* vol. 25. (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1969), p. 469.

<sup>12</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Whither India", in *Recent Essays and Writings* (Allahabad Kitabistan, 1937), pp. 3-4.

<sup>13</sup>Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 10.

ment of a systematic thought or in offering a scientific explanation. The style and approach that he adopted looked so simple that they made an instant appeal to the general public. Unlike other nationalists, Gandhi approached the political and economic problems from a highly ethical and humanistic point of view. In his search for the solutions to the political and moral problems, Gandhi used to invoke his inner voice. Religious minded as he was, quite often he used to be sentimental too.

Nehru often found it difficult to appreciate this peculiar attitude and approach of Gandhi who "seemed to be wandering off into a world of his own."<sup>12</sup> He never objected to Gandhi when the latter acted on his 'instincts' (a word which Nehru preferred to intuition or inner voice) in the event of a crisis. What, he insisted was that, "a leader must have a rational grasp of the situation and is expected to give adequate reasons for his political decisions especially when he wants others to follow him."<sup>13</sup> More than the actions, on many occasions, it was the reason which Gandhi gave for his actions that used to upset him most. He often felt that much of what Gandhi said in the early phase of the movement did not go well with modern psychological experience and method. He was therefore frank enough to admit that there was "a fundamental difference between his (Gandhi's) outlook on life and what might be called the modern outlook."<sup>14</sup> Gandhi believed that the acute economic disparity between the rich and the poor was the creation of 'foreign rule and the exploitation that accompanied it'. It was also the product of "the capitalist industrial civilization of the West as embodied in the big machine." His reaction against both, according to Nehru, prompted him to think in terms of the good olden days of the self-contained village community.<sup>15</sup> Nehru, however had an altogether different analysis and approach to the industrial civilization and its problems.

<sup>12</sup>Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi—A Study in Revolution* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1968), p. 243.

<sup>13</sup>Abu Sayyed Ayyub, "Jawaharlal Nehru on Religion," in A B Shaw (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Critical Tribute* (Bombay: Manak Publications, 1969), p. 73.

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: The Signet Press, 1946), p. 485.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 485.

## ON RELIGION AND POLITICS

Nehru and Gandhi had divergent views on religion and politics. While religion did make a strong and powerful appeal to Gandhi, it had no impact on Nehru. Gandhi regarded politics and religion as inseparable. Politics was religion in action. He never believed that the two were mutually exclusive. He believed in God,<sup>16</sup> and had great faith in prayer. But his prayer meetings were all occasions for him to speak about the political and moral advancement of the country. Unlike Gandhi, Nehru had an altogether different understanding of religion. He believed that:

usually religion becomes an asocial quest for God or the Absolute, and the religious man is concerned far more with his own salvation than with the good of society. And organized religion invariably becomes a vested interest and thus inevitably a reactionary force opposing change and progress.<sup>17</sup>

Nehru's psychological disposition was not at all religious but secular, rational and scientific. He had a natural distaste for everything rooted in irrational faith. His scientific background and the Western influence on him might have sharpened his critical way of thinking. He did not like the frequent diversion to moral problems and spiritual values which Gandhi insisted upon along with the questions of political freedom and social and economic emancipation of the masses. He was, therefore, naturally inclined to think that the mixing up of religion and politics under Gandhi's leadership was encouraging the reactionary movement of revivalism. Expressing frankly his displeasure over this, Nehru wrote:

Gandhiji indeed was continually laying stress on the religious and spiritual side of the movement. His religion was not dogmatic but it did mean a definitely religious outlook on life, and the whole movement was strongly influenced by

<sup>16</sup>About Gandhi's belief in God, Pyarelal wrote in the Preface to his book *Mahatma Gandhi : The Early Phase*, vol. I, "He believed in the ultimate Supreme Being and he says that for thirty years he struggled to see God face to face..."

<sup>17</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op.cit., p. 372.

this and took on a revivalist character as far as the masses were concerned.<sup>19</sup>

Nehru did not like the growth of religion in national politics. He wanted to deal with the political problems on the political plane only. It was his conviction that religious outlook often negated the ability for right thinking. He looked upon it as an "enemy of clear thought for it is based not only on the acceptance without demur of certain fixed and unalterable theories and dogmas, but also on sentiment and emotion and passion."<sup>20</sup> Though he felt disturbed over the development, he often found himself utterly helpless in the situation.

It may be argued in all fairness that Gandhi's religion was neither conventional nor traditional. He was the one who revolted, and raised his voice of protest against religious obscurantism and dogmatism. Among the contemporary leading nationalists, he was perhaps the only one who had gone very deep into the "religious and philosophical texts of the classical Indian tradition as well as in the writings of daring Western moralists of the 19th century like Tolstoy, Thoreau, Ruskin, Emerson and Carlyle."<sup>21</sup> Instead of discarding religion altogether, his attempt was to reinterpret it in such a way as to meet the requirements of a modern society. As a matter of fact, "his was a constant struggle against the divisiveness of communalism", and so he insisted upon the "equality of all religions and racial communities of India."<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that Gandhi was seriously concerned about the moral and spiritual regeneration of India and looked upon it as a necessary prerequisite for her political liberation and economic progress. Nehru, on the other hand, considered the problem of political independence and economic progress as the primary objective of the whole movement. Both had divergent views on the scope and object of the National Congress. While Gandhi wanted to make it primarily an instrument of moral and spiritual regeneration of the country together with the political programme of winning freedom, Nehru

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>21</sup>Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, op cit., p. 18.

<sup>22</sup>Jean V. Bouduard, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 152.

would have certainly liked the Congress to work mainly for the liberation of India. Unlike Nehru, Gandhi had a much wider social mission the consciousness of which kept him "outside the modern tradition of political reasoning" and he was at times reluctant "to follow a strictly logical route in coming to conclusions."<sup>12</sup> In the pursuit of his comprehensive universal mission, Gandhi was eager to instil a new spirit and value into the Indian life with least damage to its traditional structure. But Nehru, on the contrary, desired to change the structure itself in the light of the liberal traditions of the West. In 1934, when Gandhi came to realise that Congress could not fulfil all the demands of his comprehensive plan, he decided to break his formal relation with the Congress and showed his keen interest in the 'constructive programme'. Nehru, on the contrary, never thought of snapping his relation with the Congress and all his activities were largely confined to it.<sup>13</sup>

Thus with all his differences, Nehru found it impossible to keep aloof from Gandhi and his philosophy of life. Despite all his scepticism about religion, Nehru was conscious of its intrinsic value. He admitted that religion satisfied the inner urges of man for something which the world of reason and science could not explain. In a way it fulfilled one of the basic needs of life. Though not religious in the formal sense, Nehru was inclined to accept many things which Gandhi advocated as the essence of religion. This was fairly evident when he wrote that he greatly admired "the moral and ethical side of our movement and of satyagraha."<sup>14</sup>

### ON SIN AND SALVATION

Nehru and Gandhi were of divergent views on the question of sin and salvation. Their clash was essentially a clash between reason and faith. In his larger programme of social action, Gandhi always stressed the need for individual virtue and the development of national character. Being deeply religious in outlook he thought in terms of personal salvation and so he was keenly interested in the eradication of sin from individuals. Economic development

<sup>12</sup>Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>S. Abud Hussain, *The Way of Gandhi and Nehru* (New York, Bombay Asia Publishing House, 1959) p. 5.

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 73.

or society's welfare was not given much priority in his general scheme of things; and he was least interested in the question of changing the social structure. "The follower of Swadeshi", wrote Gandhi himself, "never takes upon himself the vain task of trying to reform the world, for he believes that the world is moved and always will be moved according to the rules set by God."<sup>25</sup> Yet he had a passion to reform the world, but that was the reform of the individual, "the conquest over the seases and the desire to indulge them, which is sin."<sup>26</sup>

Nehru disagreed with such a general outlook of Gandhi based on his faith in personal salvation. He had no grasp of the ideas of sin and salvation and so he frankly admitted his inability to appreciate Gandhiji's thinking on it. More than that he often found it difficult to understand Gandhi's metaphysical and mystical reasons for a purely political movement. The explanations he offered on many occasions reflected his socially conservative approach and Nehru felt greatly upset about it. The more he critically examined Gandhi's general outlook the more he felt he was drifting away from his leader. In an agonising tone he wrote about his predicament "I am getting more and more certain that there can be no further political cooperation between Bapu and me .. We had better go our different ways. My way will keep me in jail."<sup>27</sup>

It should be noted that Nehru was just toying with the idea of a break. On mature reflection, he found it impossible to push his differences with Gandhi to a breaking point. His essentially conciliatory attitude enabled him to avoid extreme steps. He was willing to subordinate his differences and dislikes to the larger cause of national freedom towards which the whole political movement was gradually advancing.<sup>28</sup> He had great admiration for Gandhi as a man of action despite the fact that he often appeared to be vague and ambiguous about his objective. Gandhi, no doubt, was

<sup>25</sup>Gandhi, quoted in *ibid*, pp. 511-12.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 512.

<sup>27</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's Diary entry, 14 July 1931, quoted in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 177.

<sup>28</sup>S. Gopal, "Formative Ideology of Jawaharlal Nehru", in K. N. Panikkar (ed.), *National and Left Movements in India* (Delhi: Vivas Publishing House, 1980), p. 9.

passionately desirous of moving in a certain direction, but his direction, Nehru felt, was "wholly at variance with modern ideas and conditions."<sup>29</sup> Yet both could work in close cooperation and maintain a harmony between themselves.

### ON TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE

Regarding the practical application of Gandhi's concept of truth and non-violence to politics, Nehru encountered some dilemmas and difficulties. For Gandhi, the realization of truth through love and non-violence was the ultimate goal of life. He considered his own life as an experiment with truth. In his reinterpretation of religion and politics, Gandhi stressed the need to recognise the fundamental differences between "sectarian beliefs and religious commitment, between power politics and pure politics."<sup>30</sup> He believed that politics was corrupted by power seeking, and so to purify politics, it was necessary to observe certain ethical ideas in the realm of politics and social service. Gandhi's aim as a political moralist was, therefore, to urge upon all men to accept moral values especially of truth and non-violence as absolutely essential.

Nehru, however, had some reservations about this view-point of Gandhi. Instead of talking about the ultimate truth, he was more interested in finding the right step to take, and the right direction to proceed and the truth of the present. A politician, he believed, could not think like a prophet nor could he be an ultimate seeker of truth. He should think in terms of compromises or be ready to choose the lesser one if the choice was between two evils. Ultimately all had to pass through a process of trial and error.<sup>31</sup> Gandhi's mysticism did not appeal to him. Nehru said on 3 January 1947:

For a hungry man or a hungry woman truth has little meaning, he wants food; for a hungry man God has no meaning, he wants food. And India is a hungry, starving country and to talk of Truth and God and even of many of the fine things

<sup>29</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 310.

<sup>30</sup>Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., p. 375.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

of life to the millions who are starving is a mockery. We have to find food for them, clothing, housing, education, health and so on—when we have done that, we can philosophise and think of God.<sup>32</sup>

From this it might be argued that the huge task of nation-building, of emancipating men and women socially and politically, of raising their general standard of living, which for Gandhi, was essentially a means to the higher aim of the realization of truth, became, for Nehru, an end in itself.

Nehru's attitude to the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence was quite interesting. Though he was attracted to it more and more, he "did not give an absolute allegiance to the doctrine of non-violence or accept it for ever."<sup>33</sup> But in the Indian situation though he considered it as a right policy, he was not prepared to accept it as an unchallengeable political creed. He did not rule out the possibility of the use of force in a particular situation. "Everything that comes in the way", he said, "will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary. And there seems to be little doubt that coercion will often be necessary."<sup>34</sup> It was Nehru's strong belief that individuals could practise and observe strict adherence to Gandhi's non-violent method of action. But no political organization could ever do so. With all his love and respect for Gandhi, he therefore declared:

For us and for the National Congress as a whole the non-violent method was not, and could not be, a religion or an unchallengeable creed or dogma. It could only be a policy and a method promising certain results, and by these results it would have to be finally judged. Individuals might make of it a religion or incontrovertible creed. But no political organization as long as it remained political, could do so.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Presidential Address of Jawaharlal Nehru to the 34th Session of Indian Science Congress held at Delhi, J.S. Bright (ed.), *Before and After Independence (1922-1950)*, vol. I, no. 2 (New Delhi: The Indian Printing Works, n.d.), p. 410.

<sup>33</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 552.

<sup>35</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966) pp. 49-50.

While Gandhi insisted on non-violence as the only effective means for achieving his ideal, Nehru preferred "freedom with violence to subjection with non-violence."<sup>36</sup>

It should be noted that Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence evoked much sympathy and interest both at home and abroad. At home its legacy is reflected in the political programme of almost all organized political groups. Recourse to violence is outrightly condemned. According to Lloyd Rudolph "It helped to explain and legitimise, even if it was not the basis of, Nehru's non-aligned foreign policy and it continues to influence the political tactics of organized political forces."<sup>37</sup>

### DIFFERENCES ON MODERN CIVILIZATION

Gandhi's critique of modern civilization was not appreciated by Nehru who felt very strongly about it. "Few of us, I think", wrote Nehru, "accepted Gandhiji's old ideas about machinery and modern civilization."<sup>38</sup> Gandhi looked upon modern civilization with a feeling of distress and machinery as representing a 'great sin'. Most of the twenty brief chapters of his 'Hind Swaraj' were devoted to a severe indictment of the political and social institutions of modern civilization. He believed that the so-called material progress which often led to perpetual competition between man and man was a positive menace to the moral growth. In order to enjoy true freedom, Gandhi, therefore stressed the need to free the mind from the stranglehold of modern civilization. Though these ideas formed part of his earlier thinking, they bore some resemblance to the ideas of Tolstoy. Both believed that "the consciousness of the common people was frustrated by a system of 'life-corroding competition' which resulted in bondage rather than freedom."<sup>39</sup>

Unlike Gandhi, Nehru and most other Congress leaders thought of their country's progress in terms of modernization. They were tremendously influenced by the material progress of the West and

<sup>36</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Some Crises Considered", S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974), p. 25.

<sup>37</sup>Lloyd Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 217.

<sup>38</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

<sup>39</sup>Raghavan N Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 26.

they believed that India's salvation lay essentially in catching up with the scientific and technological advancement of the West. But Gandhi was bold enough to say no and reject that general viewpoint of his colleagues. To him, India's salvation did lie not in imitating the West but in becoming more like India. "Instead of copying the West, India should ask herself what she really is, where her true calling lies. The key to the recovery of her lost glory is in her ancestral village culture, her almost forgotten cottage industries such as spinning and weaving, and so forth."<sup>40</sup> Gandhi was also opposed to the idea of machine enslaving man, dehumanising and alienating man from self and society.

Nehru obviously found it difficult to agree with many of these ideas. He believed that India had many things to learn from the industrial progress of the West and wanted to do everything possible to quicken the pace of material progress. Disagreeing with his leader's point of view, Nehru remarked: "I neither think that the so-called 'Ram Raj' was very good in the past nor do I want it back. I think the Western or industrial civilization is bound to conquer India."<sup>41</sup> Refuting the argument of Gandhi, he asserted that the spirit of the modern age was represented by the West. But on the question of machine subjugating man, Nehru was shrewd enough to understand its real implications. It was not the machines that Gandhi resisted but its use to the detriment of man in terms of unemployment. Nehru was aware of this problem. He knew under the present profit system, the work was profitable to the employers only when the machine was used for production and the profit motive could be discouraged only if the urge was social improvement, and the community organized itself for the common good. Gandhi would not have objected to mechanization under proper conditions. What he disliked was the dangerous consequences of mechanization "within the framework of a market economy whose shortcomings were compounded by its backwardness."<sup>42</sup> He always considered his vision of self-sufficient villages as a viable alternative to machine civilization.

<sup>40</sup>Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi—A Study in Revolution*, op. cit., pp. 137-38.

<sup>41</sup>Nehru's letter to Gandhi, Allahabad, 11 January 1928, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), p. 14.

<sup>42</sup>T K Mahadevan (ed.), *Truth and Non-Violence*: Report of the UNESCO Symposium on Truth and Nonviolence in Gandhi's Humanism (Paris, 14-17 October 1969), (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1969), p. 165.

### ASCETIC LIFE AS A SOCIAL IDEAL

Both Nehru and Gandhi were deeply concerned about increasing mass poverty and illiteracy in India. While the former appreciated simplicity, equality and self-control, he never accepted the ascetic life preached and practised by the latter as a social ideal. Gandhi was not in favour of raising the living standard of the people beyond a certain level, for he believed that growth of luxury would lead to corruption and self-indulgence and also "at the cost of spiritual and moral values."<sup>43</sup> He saw an inherent contradiction generally between moral values and material progress. He believed that the wide disparity between the few rich and the poverty stricken masses were the result of colonial rule and 'the exploitation that accompanied it.' The industrial civilization of the West had further aggravated it. Reacting sharply against both, Gandhi looked back to the autonomous, self-sufficient:

village community where there had been an automatic balance between production, distribution and consumption; where political or economic power was spread out and not concentrated as it is today; where a kind of simple democracy prevailed;... where the evils of great cities were absent and people lived in contact with the life giving soil and breathed the pure air of the open spaces.<sup>44</sup>

Gandhi sought to curb human needs rather than to expand and satisfy them. It may be in keeping with the oriental tradition. He was relatively indifferent to the problem of more production and more consumption. He did not think it necessary for the realization of his ethical ideal. Supremacy of moral values was the most dominant element in all his thoughts and actions. For him, the yardstick of progress and civilization was not the higher standard of living but the moral perfection. In fact he believed in the voluntary restriction of wants which alone could promote real contentment and happiness.

Nehru did not agree with these ideas of Gandhi. To him, Gandhi's love and praise of poverty and suffering and the ascetic life seemed "utterly wrong and harmful doctrine and impossible of

<sup>43</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 485

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 486.

achievement."<sup>45</sup> He did not appreciate Gandhi's 'idealisation of the simple peasant life'. Expressing his complete disapproval, Nehru wrote "I have almost a horror of it and instead of submitting to it myself, I want to drag out even the peasantry from it, not to urbanisation, but to the spread of urban cultural facilities to rural areas."<sup>46</sup> He did not object to the individuals observing an ascetic life, but he was definitely opposed to make it a social ideal. He found many paradoxes and confusions in it. This led him to think that despite his close association with Gandhi he was not able to understand the objective which Gandhi had set before himself.

### TRUSTEESHIP AND SOCIAL SYSTEM

Gandhi upheld the belief that social institutions were the visible manifestations of the individuals' moral values and it was not possible to alter those institutions without changing the value orientations. Consistent with this belief Gandhi hoped to bring about a non-violent social order through Bread Labour, Trusteeship and decentralized village, and cottage industries. Nehru was not very vocal about Bread Labour, but he repudiated the theory of Trusteeship as most unreasonable. Trusteeship meant that the power for good or evil was vested in the self-appointed trustee who could exercise it at his free will. "To believe in Trusteeship," Nehru remarked,—"to give unchecked power and wealth to an individual and to expect him to use it entirely for the public good"<sup>47</sup> was not only harmful but dangerous as well. The only trusteeship that could be reasonably fair was the trusteeship of the nation and not that of an individual or group.

What disturbed him most was that, with all his keenness, love and passion for bettering the downtrodden and the oppressed, Gandhi was supporting a decaying system which generated nothing but miseries and sufferings. His refusal to analyse the fundamental causes of poverty was indeed a big shock to Nehru. He resented Gandhi's failure to protest against the semi-feudal Zamindari System which prevailed in a greater part of India or against the capitalist

<sup>45</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 510.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 511.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 528.

exploitation of both workers and the consumers. He was also very vocal against Gandhi's views on 'Varna Vyavastha'. "Caste system," Nehru said, was "wholly opposed to modern condition and the democratic ideal"<sup>62</sup> and so he stood for its abolition. Instead of trusteeship, he favoured the state ownership and control of capital and natural resources.

For Nehru, a drastic change in the existing order—social, political and economic, was fundamental to the whole movement. As the biographer of Nehru writes: "the Congress, as the spearhead of Indian nationalist movement, needed a new ideology which was oriented to economic priorities and world conditions."<sup>63</sup> This according to Nehru was the immediate task before the country. What surprised Nehru most was Gandhi's failure to think that the semi-feudal system prevalent in India was out of date and a great obstruction to general economic progress. He was not only inclined to accept the 'zamindari system' as such but wanted it to continue. In July 1934 Gandhi said at Kanpur that better relations between zamindars and tenants could be brought about by a change of hearts on both sides. If that was done, both could live in peace and harmony.<sup>64</sup> Nehru was greatly upset by this statement. "...What upset me much more", he wrote, "was Gandhi's defence ...of the big Zamindari System" and he considered it as "a very desirable part of rural and national economy."<sup>65</sup> Such a diametrically opposed view made him more and more sceptical about his future cooperation with Gandhi.

It should be noted that both Nehru and Gandhi could hardly agree with each other on their economic ideas. They had both dissimilar social and economic aims and ideals. While Nehru stood for the establishment of a democratic socialist state, Gandhi's ideal was a non-violent, agrarian society free from exploitation. While

<sup>62</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 534.

<sup>63</sup>S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>64</sup>Gandhi's discussion with Congress, Harijan and Khadi Workers, *Hindustan Times*, 27 July 1937 reproduced in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (18 May—15 September 1934), vol. 58 (New Delhi Government of India, Publications Division, 1974), p. 251. In December 1934 Gandhi had sent Nehru a newspaper cutting from *Madras Mail*. It contained an interview he had given earlier. Gandhi's defence of the Zamindari System was the essence of that interview.

<sup>65</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 477.

Gandhi championed the cause of a simple, self-contained autonomous village community Nehru rejected it by categorically stating that "the village can no longer be a self-contained economic unit".<sup>52</sup> While Gandhi advocated a simple and austere life based on renunciation and voluntary restriction, Nehru called for an increase in wealth and prosperity, and an improvement in the general standards of living. In short Nehru always regarded 'Hind Swaraj' as absolutely unreal and wanted to go much beyond the Gandhi programme.

### DIFFERENCES ON KHADI WORK

Khadi work was an integral part of Gandhi's constructive programme and he had made it clear to all Congressmen that Swaraj for the millions depend upon the spinning wheel 'humming in every village'. In a leading article on the 'Village Industries', Gandhi wrote on 16 November 1934 "But Khadi is the sun of the village solar system".<sup>53</sup> Though Nehru "called Khadi the livery of our freedom",<sup>54</sup> he had certain reservations and misgivings about it. As a matter of fact he had serious disagreement with Gandhi's preoccupation with non-political issue and he never tried to conceal it. He honestly believed that khadi propaganda was relatively a minor thing in a fast developing political situation and so he had no desire to confine his activities to it. In his letter to Gandhi on 11 January 1938 Nehru wrote:

Our khadi work is almost wholly divorced from politics and our khadi workers are developing a mentality which does not concern itself with anything outside their limited sphere of work. This may be good for the work they do, but little can be expected of them in the political field.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 536

<sup>53</sup>D. G. Tendulkar, *Mohatma. Life of Mahatma Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 4 (Bombay, Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri and D. G. Tendulkar, 1952), p. 5.

<sup>54</sup>"How to Popularise Khadi", *Haryan*, 10 February 1938, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 63 (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Publications Division, 1977), p. 175.

<sup>55</sup>Nehru's letter to Gandhi, 11 January 1928, *Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya*, Serial No. 13039, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 13.

This view, however, had no effect on Gandhi who continued with his constructive work as vigorously as before. But it provoked Acharya J.B. Kripalani to say that Nehru was wrong in his view that the khadi workers "were not interested in the fight for freedom".<sup>44</sup> In fact, they were the first to respond to the call for satyagraha. Despite this Nehru continued to hold his view that khadi had a very limited role to play in solving the economic problem of the country. Reiterating this view in a meeting held at Bombay on 18 May 1936 he said: "It is the duty of Congressmen to see that khadi is encouraged. But I went to say that in the ultimate solution of the nation's economic problem, the khadi movement has only a limited place".<sup>45</sup> He never regarded it as a sound economic proposition though he admitted that it had a definite place in the economy.

#### ON THE SUSPENSION OF THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

Nehru's active political association with Gandhi started with the non-violent non-cooperation movement and as the campaign began to take momentum in the early months of 1921, he deeply plunged into it. Until then constitutionalism and terrorism were the only two recognised methods of political action against the alien rule and he was sceptical about both. "I felt that both individual and national honour demanded a more aggressive and fighting attitude to foreign rule".<sup>46</sup> What attracted him to Gandhi at a critical juncture of the nationalist movement was the latter's new method of direct action at a mass level. He felt thrilled and excited and was wholly absorbed in the movement. But in early February 1922 there arose a sudden change, in the whole situation. Gandhi announced the suspension of the movement because of the violent incident near the village of 'Chauri Chaura'. Nehru who was then in prison was visibly upset by Gandhi's action. "We were angry", he wrote about it, "when we learned of this stoppage of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and

<sup>44</sup> J.B. Kripalani, *Gandhi—His Life and Thought* (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1970), p. 109.

<sup>45</sup> S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 7 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1975), p. 238.

<sup>46</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 34.

advancing on all fronts";<sup>23</sup> the arguments of Gandhi for the suspension of the movement seemed to him rather unconvincing. Gandhi's argument was that, had it not been suspended, it would not have been a non-violent struggle. For him the peaceful aspect of the resistance was an accepted creed and an article of faith. But for Nehru the peaceful technique of non-violent action was a virtue of the necessity dictated by the then political conditions. Hence a general feeling of dissatisfaction over the step taken by Gandhi was inevitable.

However Nehru was inclined to accept Gandhi's decision as a sound one purely from the moral and practical point of view. But what he resented was the manner in which he took the decision and enforced it abruptly without consulting anyone. Recalling the whole episode Nehru wrote: "It may be that the decision to suspend civil resistance in 1922 was a right one, though the manner of doing it left much to be desired and brought about a certain demoralisation."<sup>24</sup> This was the first jolt that he received while carrying on the political work under the leadership of Gandhi.

#### THE QUESTION OF DEFINING THE AIM AND OBJECTIVE

Since 1922, Nehru felt more and more disenchanted with some of Gandhi's ideals although personal attachment and national interest did not allow to drift away from him. However he began to examine some of his political programme more critically. He was no longer under any emotional spell and he could view things more objectively "and the springs that had moved me to action more clearly."<sup>25</sup> He was not at all happy about the vague and ambivalent attitude of Gandhi who lacked a clear perception of the future and was not serious about any long distance programme for the Congress. He wanted his followers simply to carry on the constructive programme aimed at mere social reforms. Nehru was, therefore, quite adamant on the point that the Congress must have a clearer perception of all the issues involved in the nationalist movement and that it should be clear in its objective. Like many others he too was not clear whether the Congress stood for Swaraj, Dominion Status or for complete independence. He, therefore,

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 31

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 134



emphatically asserted "We cannot escape having to answer the question now or later."<sup>62</sup>

Nehru demanded complete freedom for India at a time when the very concept of freedom had not crystallised in the National Congress. In one of his earlier letters to his father Nehru wrote "I want our country to gain complete swaraj and this should be our aim till we succeed. ... I still think that often our leaders forget this. ..." <sup>63</sup> He believed that a declaration by the Congress in favour of independence had been held up under the pressure and influence of Gandhi and some other leaders. The arguments advanced by Gandhi<sup>64</sup> at the Gauhati session in 1926 were wholly untenable and based on an entirely wrong ideology.<sup>65</sup> Impatient as he was, he, therefore, urged upon Gandhi and others to make clear the goal of the movement, and himself started the campaign for complete independence. He questioned the wisdom of carrying on 'petty reformist activities'. Gandhi, on the other hand, regarded these questions as premature, and showed his keen interest in the constructive social reformist programme of the Congress.

### DOMINION STATUS OR INDEPENDENCE

The first significant political clash between Nehru and Gandhi was on the vital issue of Dominion Status Vs Complete Independence.

<sup>62</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Whether India", in his *Recent Essays and writing*, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>63</sup>"On the Indian Situation", extract from a letter written by Jawaharlal Nehru to his father from Montana and published in *AoF*, 2 March 1927, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* vol. 2 (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), pp. 297-98.

<sup>64</sup>Gandhi opposed a resolution at the Gauhati session held in 1926 that Swaraj should be defined to mean independence. While speaking on the Independence Resolution in the Subject-Committee Gaohdi said, "Supposing complete independence was something absolutely superior to 'Swaraj', even then I suggest to you to be patient and attain what is possible at the present moment and then mount further steps. One step is now enough for me." Gandhi spoke for a second time on the Resolution and said, "If you define the word 'Swaraj' today, you will be simply limiting its potency" "Speeches of Gandhi at Congress Session, Gauhati, 25 December 1926 in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 32 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division 1969), pp. 468-71.

<sup>65</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Note on a Proposal for a Parliamentary Bill for India, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, op. cit. p. 308.

dence. As stated above, Nehru had been advocating that the aim of the nationalist movement shall have to be complete independence for the country. In his presidential address at the U.P. Provincial Conference, held in the autumn of 1923, Nehru had stressed the issue of complete independence. But it was no easy task for him to get this idea endorsed by the Congress. He had to face stiff resistance not only from Gandhi but also from the Liberals. While Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose "wanted to make the issue of independence clear in the Congress" ... "they (the Liberals) publicly glorified the pomp and power of the Empire."<sup>64</sup> However, in the Madras Session of the Congress held in 1927, Nehru was able to push through his resolution on complete independence. Though the resolution had been adopted by the Congress, Gandhi felt most unhappy about it. He denounced it as an 'irresponsible resolution', "hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed."<sup>65</sup> He was also critical of Nehru's resolution on the boycott of British goods. These resolutions did not serve any useful purpose when the Congress knew that it could not carry into effect. He strongly felt that "by passing such resolutions we make an exhibition of our impotence, become the laughing stock of critics and invite the contempt of the adversary."<sup>66</sup> He accused Nehru of "encouraging mischief-makers and hooligans" and felt that most of the resolutions he had sponsored at Madras "could have been delayed for one year."<sup>67</sup>

Nehru had no mind for a confrontation with Gandhi on this issue even though he replied somewhat effectively to Gandhi's adverse comments and reactions. He drew back from the controversy and wrote to his leader "Above everything I admire action and daring and courage, and I found them all in you in a superlative degree. And I felt instinctively that however much I disagree with you, your great personality and your possession of these qua-

<sup>64</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>65</sup> Gandhi, "The National Congress", *Young India*, 5 January 1928, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 35 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1969), p. 438.

<sup>66</sup> Gandhi, "The National Congress", *Young India*, 5 January 1928, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 35, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

<sup>67</sup> Gandhi's letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, 4 January 1928, in *Ibid.*, pp. 432-33.

lities would carry us to our goal."<sup>20</sup> Thus without breaking his relation with Gandhi, Nehru strained his nerve in securing the organizational commitment towards the goal of complete independence.

But Nehru had to fight again at the All Parties Conference held a year later to resist the tendency to pull back to Dominion Status. Reiterating once again his position there, his effort was to make the people realise that the struggle was essentially for an altogether different political structure and not just for the Indianisation of the present order which Dominion Status signified. It was his firm conviction that India could not strive for anything less than complete freedom. "Any other deal", he said "would be beneath her dignity and not worth the sacrifices that we have made or called upon to make in the future."<sup>21</sup> Nehru had warned the leaders at the All Parties Conference, held in Lucknow on 29 August 1928, that it would be fatal to India to accept Dominion Status as the objective. His speech clearly showed his unyielding attitude on the question. In his speech, Nehru said: "I am specially unable to reconcile myself to Dominion Status and all its implications. ... It seems to me that we are drifting back from the 20th century to the ways and methods of the 19th ... I do submit that it would be a wrong thing for India to make Dominion Status as our objective. Those of us who think with me have carefully considered this resolution and we have definitely come to the conclusion that we cannot support it. ..."<sup>22</sup> But, when the resolution favouring Dominion Status finally came up, he had no option but to dissociate himself with it. That adamant attitude had a profound effect that it forced Gandhi to work out a compromise formula which he reluctantly accepted. As on previous occasions, he was faced with the problem of falling in line with Gandhi or of searing his relation with him. Obviously his political wisdom and sagacity prompted him to remain with Gandhi.

In December 1928 when the advocates of Dominion Status and

<sup>20</sup>Nehru to Gandhi, Allahabad, 11 January 1928, Gandhi Sangrahalaya, Serial No. 13039, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>21</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "A Foreign Policy for India" (Mootatta, Switzerland, 13 September 1927) AJCC File No. 2, 1927, pp. 1-27, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 317.

independence again clashed at the Calcutta Congress Nehru frankly told Gandhi "Bapu, the difference between you and me is this; you live in gradualism; I stand for revolution." "My dear young man," Gandhi retorted, "I have made revolutions while others have only shouted revolutions. When your lungs are exhausted, and you really are serious about it, you will come to me, and I shall then show you how a revolution is made."<sup>73</sup> Later, in 1930, when Gandhi started his 'Salt satyagraha', Nehru was not much enthusiastic about it. But when he actually saw the abounding enthusiasm of the people, he felt "a little abashed and ashamed for having questioned the efficacy of this method when it was first proposed by Gandhi."<sup>74</sup> Later Nehru found himself in another embarrassing situation when he reluctantly signed the "Delhi Manifesto"<sup>75</sup> on 1 November 1929 under the influence of Gandhi. He could not ignore Gandhi's appeal to him on the ground of discipline. He was criticised by the radical group in the Congress for his compromise with Gandhi. He felt greatly upset and wrote to Gandhi on 4 November 1929 offering to withdraw from the Congress presidency. But "a soothing letter from him and three days of reflection calmed me."<sup>76</sup> Despite all the setbacks and opposition, Nehru derived a sense of satisfaction when the Lahore Congress presided over by him declared complete independence as the goal of the Congress.

#### DIFFERENT SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

After his return from Europe in December 1927 Nehru began to play an increasingly important role in the national politics. His intimate contact with the revolutionaries at Brussels and his extensive reading during the period had brought about a radical change

<sup>73</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's Speech at the All Parties Conference, Lucknow, 29 August 1928 in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, op. cit.: p. 57-61.

<sup>74</sup>Pyarelal, "Gandhi and Nehru—A Unique Relationship", *Link* (New Delhi) vol. 7, no. 42, 30 May 1965, p. 32.

<sup>75</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup>The "Delhi Manifesto" appreciated the sincerity underlying the Vicaroy's statement of 31 October 1929 on the Round Table Conference to settle the Indian problem. For details of the 'Manifesto', see S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 5. (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), p. 165.

<sup>77</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., pp. 195-96.

in him. He felt that he had a clearer perception of the national and international problems. His growing belief in socialism also began to change his attitude about the nature of 'independence' India was to achieve in the years to come. He was, at the same time, equally conscious that his ideas and outlook were at variance with those of Gandhi and many others. Yet he wanted to give a new orientation to the whole political movement. That, according to him, was possible only with the spread of socialist ideas "especially among the more politically conscious Congress workers, so that when the time came for another declaration of policy, we might be ready for a notable advance."<sup>17</sup>

The socialist in the country had long been critical of Gandhi whose metaphysical outlook and approach to politics was greatly resented by them. Nehru, to some extent, had shared their criticism.<sup>18</sup> But he believed that, though Gandhi might be averse to socialist ideas, the logic of the political situation which was fast developing in the country would gradually compel him to see the necessity for fundamental social change. In other words Gandhi might disagree with the means but not with the objective. However events proved to the contrary. "I realise now", wrote Nehru, "that there are basic differences between Gandhi's ideals and the socialist objective."<sup>19</sup> Gandhi also sometimes called himself a socialist, but he used the term in a sense which did not carry the economic framework of the society that generally goes by the name of Socialism.<sup>20</sup> To Nehru, Gandhi appeared to be an "extraordinary paradox" and a "philosophical anarchist."<sup>21</sup> With all his sympathy and love for the poor he still wanted to support a system which produced that very evil. Nehru frankly admitted his inability to understand this curious aspect of Gandhi's thoughts. He totally disagreed with his leader's favourite idea of 'conversion and not coercion.' To be good in one's personal life and then the rest of the things will be alright was, to Nehru, not a political or scientific attitude but a narrow moralist attitude.<sup>22</sup> In fact Nehru's innate disposition was to revolt against such attitude. Thus he was often

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 403.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 405.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 515.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 509.

troubled by the thought that in regard to their social ideas and objective, both stood at poles apart and there was hardly any meeting ground.

### THE CHALLENGE AND RETREAT

Nehru was critical of Gandhi for the latter's indecisive attitude to the political struggle particularly after the non-cooperation movement. It appeared to him that the man of action during the movement had become quite passive and indifferent since then. "During the non-cooperation period", Nehru wrote to Gandhi, "you were supreme; you were in your element and automatically you took the right step. But since you came out of prison something seems to have gone wrong and you have been very obviously ill at ease."<sup>13</sup> Gandhi felt annoyed by Nehru's 'open warfare' against him. In a sharp rejoinder he wrote on 17 January 1928:

The difference between you and me appear to me to be so vast and radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us. I can't conceal from you my grief that I should lose a comrade so valiant, so faithful, so able and honest as you have always been, but in serving a cause, comradeships have got to be sacrificed.<sup>14</sup>

Assuring that the dissolution of their comradeship would in no way affect their personal and family relations Gandhi challenged him to come out openly and give his grave political differences in writing. He offered to publish in *Young India* with his reply.<sup>15</sup>

Nehru had really no intention to annoy Gandhi whom he had always held in highest esteem. It was his radical views that came into clash with Gandhi. But he never thought of precipitating a

<sup>13</sup>Nehru's letter to Gandhi, Allahabad, 31 January 1928, Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Serial No. 13039, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>14</sup>Gandhi's letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, Sabarmati Ashram, 17 January 1928, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 25 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publication Division, 1969), p. 470.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid

crisis. He had no mind to face the challenge, so, he decided to make a hasty retreat. In order to pacify his leader Nehru at once wrote: "...nothing that can ever happen, can alter or lessen my deep regard and affection for you. ... There can be no question of our personal relations suffering. ... But even in the wider sphere am I not your child in politics though perhaps a truant and errand child."<sup>46</sup> Practical and shrewd as he was, Nehru thus avoided a possible breach with Gandhi. Despite their conflicting views, there existed a large measure of good will for each other and Nehru was fully aware of the indispensability of Gandhi for any meaningful political action.

#### ON THE QUESTION OF AN IDEOLOGICAL BASE FOR CONGRESS

Indian National Congress was a purely nationalist organization and did not have a clear social perspective. It represented several groups some of which were so ideologically backward that they often prevented the Congress from making any political advance. Nehru's effort was, in a way, to provide an ideological base, however vague and undefined it might be, for the Congress. Some of his activities in this direction brought him into conflict with Gandhi and some other leaders. He had tremendous faith in Gandhi's capacity for action; but "ideologically Gandhi was sometimes amazingly backward."<sup>47</sup> He believed that Gandhi encouraged a certain amount of vagueness with regard to the national objective to be pursued by the Congress. He also disliked the lack of clarity in Gandhi's approach. Gandhi's policy of "one step enough for me," and "look after the means and the end will take care of itself," were neither a scientific attitude nor perhaps even an ethical attitude.<sup>48</sup> For Nehru, political liberation was only a means to the ultimate end of liberating the masses from their social and economic inequality, oppression and exploitation. Gandhi's supreme concern was with the means rather than with the ends; he was least interested in the final objectives. His approach, both moral and political,

<sup>46</sup>Nehru's letter to Gandhi, Allahabad, 23 January 1928, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, *op. cit.* pp. 18-19.

<sup>47</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.* p. 365

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 409

was more 'intuitive rather than intellectual'.<sup>33</sup>

In his presidential address to the Lahore Congress in 1929, Nehru frankly confessed that he was a "socialist and republican," but had no illusions about the impossibility for the national Congress "to adopt a full socialist programme."<sup>34</sup> The many sided bourgeois character of the Congress had convinced him of it. But still he wanted the philosophy of socialism to permeat the whole structure of the society. His whole effort was to give the organization a new look and a new orientation. In other words "What Nehru was seeking was a programme for India not from a purely socialist standpoint but from a Congress viewpoint with some leaning towards socialism."<sup>35</sup> In his anxiety to promote the cause of socialism Nehru succeeded in May 1929 in getting a resolution passed by the All India Congress Committee stating that "... in order, therefore, to remove the poverty and misery and to ameliorate the condition of the Indian masses, it is essential to make revolutionary change in the present social and economic structure of society and to remove the gross inequalities."<sup>36</sup> Later in 1931, he was able to persuade the Congress to adopt the famous Karachi resolution<sup>37</sup> based on the socialist axiom. According to Tendulkar, a biographer of Gandhi, the resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy originated in the early morning talks in Delhi between Gandhi and Nehru in February-March 1931. They had mutually agreed upon a draft resolution which was to be placed before the Working Committee and Subject Committee.<sup>38</sup> That

<sup>33</sup> Stayabratra Raichawdhari, *Leftist Movement in India (1917-1947)* (Calcutta: Mitreya Association, 1977), pp. 153-54.

<sup>34</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address, Lahore, 29 December 1929, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 4 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), p. 192.

<sup>35</sup> S. Gopal "Formative Ideology of Nehru", in K.N. Panikkar (ed.), *National and Left Movement in India*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1935)*, vol. 1 (The Congress Working Committee Publication on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary, 1935), p. 580.

<sup>37</sup> The Resolution on "Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme", stated "In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions." A.M. Zaidi, S.G. Zaidi (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, vol. X (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1980), pp. 149-50.

<sup>38</sup> D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma—Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 3 (Bombay: Vithalbhai K. Javeri and D.G. Tendulkar, 1952), p. 111.

resolution according to Nehru represented a 'newlook' in the Congress. But that mild socialist resolution's adopted by the Karachi Congress created some commotion in the Congress. A section of the Congress leaders started a campaign against it and Nehru was severely criticised. He believed that his critics had derived their strength mainly from Gandhi.

Unlike Nehru, Gandhi showed no interest in a scientific view of the inner contradictions of the social reality and—the laws of social change. He believed that social transformation could be achieved according to one's own aspirations provided moral and spiritual progress of the individuals was first realised. He never considered it essential 'to alter the relations of production' or of class exploitation for social transformation.<sup>66</sup> This was not the case with Nehru who had a clear grasp of the social reality and the class forces operating in it. His socialist ideas originated in that background, but did not find favour with Gandhi and many others.

It was really painful for him to learn, that the Working Committee in its meeting held on 18 June 1934 had already passed a resolution condemning the Congress socialist movement. He felt that the committee's unprincipled approach to this political question could help promote only the vested interests and 'opportunistic elements. Nehru was greatly disillusioned not because of any sudden setback in the movement, but because of the surrender by the Working Committee of all those principles and ideals for which he had been struggling for long. The resolution that was passed had categorically stated that "In view of the loose talk about the confiscation of private property and necessity of class war," it reminded Congressmen that the Karachi Resolution "neither contemplates confiscation of private property without just cause or compensation, nor advocacy of class war. The Working Committee is further of the opinion that confiscation and class war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence."<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup>Patiabhi Sitaramayya, *History of Indian National Congress (1885-1935)*, vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 779 for details of the Resolution.

<sup>67</sup>K. Damodaran, *Indian Thought—A Critical Survey* (Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1967), p. 442.

<sup>68</sup>Quoted in Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 557. For the text of the resolution, see A. M. Zaidi, S. G. Zaidi (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, vol. X, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

Though the resolution was aimed at the newly formed Congress Socialist Party,<sup>101</sup> its immediate target was Nehru. But the most disturbing aspect of this development was that the opponents of socialism had obtained the approval of Gandhi for such a resolution. Nehru, therefore, decided to seek immediate clarification on this vital question and after his release from prison in August 1933, he exchanged a series of letters with Gandhi. In the course of this exchange of ideas Gandhi acknowledged his temperamental differences with him in the enunciation of ideals. While broadly agreeing with the objective of bringing about an equalisation in the social order by the divesting of vested interests, Gandhi showed his greater interest in the methods to be pursued.<sup>102</sup> However he admitted that "Jawaharlal's way is not my way. . . . I do not accept practically any of his methods. . . ."<sup>103</sup> Thus the gulf between the two remained unbridgeable so far as the economic and social aspects of the struggle was concerned.

### COERCION VS CONVERSION

Gandhi was highly suspicious of socialism and more particularly of Marxism because of his belief that the two were associated with violence and class war. He believed that Western Socialism was based on the conceptions that were fundamentally opposed to those of Hinduism. He was not attracted by the promise of socialism, but he was willing to put up with capitalism as a necessary evil, although he disliked both.<sup>104</sup> As he was keenly interested in maintaining class harmony, he was temperamentally opposed to any ideology which preached violence, hatred and class conflict. "I would strain every nerve to prevent a class war,"<sup>105</sup> wrote

<sup>101</sup>The Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934.

<sup>102</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Interview to the Press", *The Bombay Chronicle*, 18 September 1933, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. V, op. cit., p. 537.

<sup>103</sup>Gandhi to Agatha Harrison, 30 April 1936, in B. N. Pande (ed.), *The Indian Nationalist Movement (1885-1947), Select Documents* (Delhi: The Macmillan Company of India Ltd., 1979), p. 124.

<sup>104</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., pp. 516-17.

<sup>105</sup>Gandhi to Agatha Harrison, 30 April 1936, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 62 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1975), p. 353.

Gandhi, while commenting on Nehru's speech on socialism in 1936.

Nehru, from the beginning, had denounced capitalism and was known for his crusade against imperialism. He was absolutely clear in his mind that an imperialist power would not give up its domination and the dominant class would not surrender its position, power and privilege unless effective pressure was built up against them. His constant effort was, therefore, to organize workers, peasants and the youth and this inevitability led to certain frictions. What however irritated him most was Gandhi's refusal to recognize the existence of class conflict in a capitalist society which created violence and hatred. While Nehru was firm in his conviction that without demolishing the existing capitalist structure, exploitation and oppression leading to violence and class war, could not be done away with. Quite opposed to this, Gandhi said : "It is my conviction that if the state suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop nonviolence at any time."<sup>103</sup>

It may be noted that Nehru's ideas of stateownership and social control did not appeal to Gandhi. Gandhi preferred Trusteeship because of his strong opposition to an increase in the State power. "State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form .. it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence."<sup>104</sup> Gandhi therefore did not favour the idea of state ownership in place of private property. In his view "Violence of private ownership" was less harmful than "violence of the state".<sup>105</sup> It was difficult for Nehru to accept this view of Gandhi. He thought it was a mere wishful thinking of Gandhi to convert princes, landlords and capitalists into trustees of their properties for the common good.

#### INTERRELATION BETWEEN FASTS AND POLITICS

Nehru felt terribly distressed when Gandhi announced his twentyone day fast in early May 1933. He was far from convinced

<sup>103</sup>Gandhi, quoted in D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma : Life of Mahandas Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 4, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15.

of the efficacy of such methods like fast in politics. Gandhi's insistence on 'purity and sacrifice' appeared to him to be 'sheer revivalism'.<sup>104</sup> He thought of speaking very strongly against it, but ruthlessly suppressed all his irritations. He began to feel that he was drifting away from him because, politics of emotionalism could never be a basis for concerted action. But he could not do so at the risk of hurting the sentiments of his leader.

Nehru was greatly upset when he learned about Gandhi's fast<sup>105</sup> unto death on a minor issue like the separate electorate for depressed classes. He could not imagine what disastrous consequences would befall the country in case his fast ended in a tragedy. What hurt his feeling most was the religious and sentimental approach to national political problems. Nehru, in a way, found himself in a dilemma. On the one hand it was impossible for him to appreciate Gandhi's action and seriously thought of going his own way; on the other, his 'emotional attachment' to him was so strong that he could hardly think of any political progress without Gandhi. In a visibly touching manner Nehru wrote about his state of mind: "My little world in which he has occupied such a place, shakes and totters, and there seems to be darkness and emptiness everywhere... Shall I not see him again? And whom shall I go to when I am in doubt and require wise counsel and am afflicted and in sorrow and need loving comfort."<sup>106</sup>

This was not the only occasion when Nehru felt greatly upset and perturbed. A chain of events that followed the fast administered shock after shock to him and his mental agony persisted in him for long. In 1934 Gandhi described the terrible earthquake in Bihar<sup>107</sup> as a divine punishment for the sin of untouchability. Nehru, who was furious at this crude and irrational pronouncement over a natural calamity, remarked: "anything more opposed to the scientific outlook it would be difficult to imagine."<sup>108</sup> A few months later Gandhi's sudden withdrawal of the Civil Disobe-

<sup>104</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 373.

<sup>105</sup>On 7 August 1934 Gandhi commenced his seven days fast as a penance to the acts of violence committed on the 'Sanatanists' at Ajmer and thought that self purification was necessary for the removal of untouchability.

<sup>106</sup>Nehru's letter, 15 September 1932, in *Glimpses of World History* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962—Second Indian edition), pp. 337-38.

<sup>107</sup>The earthquake in Bihar took place on 15 January 1934.

<sup>108</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 490.

dience in April 1934, because of the failure of a "valued companion to perform his full prison task"<sup>111</sup> left Nehru in utter distress. More than the abandonment of Civil Disobedience, it was the reason as given by Gandhi that had shocked him. His unhappiness found expression in his prison diary where he wrote: "How can one work with Bapu if he functions in this way and leaves people in the lurch?"<sup>112</sup> This mental agony was fairly evident when he wrote later: "I had a sudden and intense feeling that something broke inside me, a bond that I had valued very greatly had snapped. I felt terribly lonely in this wide world . Again I felt sensation of spiritual isolation, of being a perfect stranger out of harmony, not only with the crowds that passed me but also with those whom I had valued as dear and close colleagues."<sup>113</sup> But soon realised that tears and sorrows could not be the safe companions in the political world.

#### DIFFERENCES ON GANDHI-IRWIN PACT

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 5 March 1931 was too bitter a pill for Nehru to taste. He was closely in touch with Gandhi during the latter's negotiations with Lord Irwin. But their agreement as it finally emerged particularly its second clause concerning the safeguards in the new constitution was indeed a shock to him. He was not satisfied with the "constitutional questions in respect of which Gandhi agreed to further consideration of the scheme for the constitutional government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference."<sup>114</sup> He was also not happy on the question of prisoners. In fact there was some lacuna in each of the items of agreement. Expressing his feelings of utter frustration over this, Nehru wrote: "So I lay and pondered on that March night and in my heart there was a great emptiness as if something precious gone, almost beyond recall.. The thing had been done, our leader had committed himself."<sup>115</sup> No doubt he was deeply dis-

<sup>111</sup>B R. Nanda, *Gandhi and Nehru* (Delhi: Oxford University press, 1979), p. 9.

<sup>112</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Prison Diary", 12 May 1934, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6, *op. cit.*, p. 251

<sup>113</sup>Nehru to Gandhi 13 August 1934, in S. Gopal (ed) *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

<sup>114</sup>Patali Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress (1885-1935)*, vol. I, *op. cit.*, p. 736

<sup>115</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

appointed. But he realised that even if he disagreed with him nothing much could be done. The very idea of "break with him," or of revolting against him, or even of throwing him out also would not help the situation though it might provide some personal satisfaction.

Though Gandhi tried to allay his fears, Nehru was not much convinced by his arguments in the beginning. However a few days later Nehru not only compromised but was even persuaded to sponsor the resolution supporting the Gandhi-Irwin agreement in the Karachi session of the Congress. By taking such a hard decision to support, he thought he was virtually preventing a possible rift in the organization. However his sudden decision to compromise with Gandhi came up for a sharp criticism by many including Subhas Chandra Bose. Bose felt, Nehru, being the president of the Congress at that time had a greater responsibility "to understand and advocate the left wing point of view and his refusal would have been sufficient to prevent the final acceptance of the Pact by Mahatma and the Working Committee."<sup>116</sup> He also criticised him for his weak submission to Mahatma like an 'obedient soldier'.

However Nehru's assessment of the situation was altogether different. He had no desire to create a rift in the party nor had any intention to leave the organization. In fact his pragmatic approach often enabled him to act as a vital link between the warring groups within the Congress. Despite all his differences with Gandhi, Nehru was never inclined to push any issue to a point of no return. As he himself observed "to desert the Congress seemed to me thus to cut oneself adrift from the vital urge of the nation, to blunt the most powerful weapon we had, and perhaps to waste energy in ineffective adventurism."<sup>117</sup>

#### NATIONALISM AND CONGRESS SOCIALISM

In the wake of the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement by Gandhi in 1933, there emerged a socialist group highly

<sup>116</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle* (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 200-01.

<sup>117</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 365.

critical of Gandhi in the ranks of the Congress, and in the first Congress Socialist Conference held at Patna in 1934, the programme of the group was formulated.<sup>118</sup> This move was essentially an open protest against Gandhi's leadership and the policy and programme which it had been following. Inspired largely by the tenets of Marxism, this group genuinely doubted the efficacy of non-violence as a method of effective political action. More than that their immediate concern was to prevent a possible drift to constitutionalism. Though Gandhi welcomed the rise of Socialist Party in the Congress, he had no bogey for their programme. He found them all "as a body to be in a hurry."<sup>119</sup> Their talk of class war, expropriation, and violence was repugnant to him. "I tell my socialist friends", Gandhi said at Faizpur in December 1936: "You are not talking anything new; our ancestors always said, this is God's earth, it is neither of the capitalists nor of Zamindars nor of anybody. It belongs to God."<sup>120</sup> Though Gandhi called himself as a socialist, the young socialists within the Congress did not take his socialist credentials seriously. To them as well as to Nehru Gandhian socialism was a kind of "muddled humanitarianism".<sup>121</sup> Jayaprakash Narain described him as a case of "autochthonism".<sup>122</sup> However, it should be noted that Gandhi's concept of socialism was not evolved out of any Western theoretical formulations. "His concept of socialism was entirely his own in the sense that socialism did not represent itself to him as a necessary and logical stage in social evolution growing out of technological basis and production relations of capitalism."<sup>123</sup> Nehru had broad sympathy with the socialist group but did not identify himself with it. Personally he would have liked the Congress to adopt a full socialist pro-

<sup>118</sup>On the publication of the programme of the Congress Socialist Party, an attempt was made by some of its leaders to ascertain Gandhi's views on it. Six questions were submitted to him and Gandhi answered them.

<sup>119</sup>Gandhi's letter to Nehru, 17 August 1934, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 58, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>120</sup>Gandhi's speech at the Exhibition, in Narendra Nath Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register (July-December 1936)*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: The annual Register Office), p. 238.

<sup>121</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 515.

<sup>122</sup>Jayaprakash Narain, *Why Socialism?* (Benares: The All India Congress Socialist Party, 1936), p. 84.

<sup>123</sup>Buddhadeva Bhattacharyya, *Evolution of the Political Philosophy of Gandhi* (Calcutta: Calcutta Book House, 1969), p. 259.

gramme, but he decided to keep away from the Congress Socialist party. He had his own reasons for not joining the group though he was looked upon by it as a source of inspiration and guidance. In fact Nehru regarded the formation of the Congress Socialist party as a premature step, and it could only help divert the attention from the burning issue of independence. The socialists did not have much mass support in the organization and so he doubted their competence to build up enough strength in order to get their economic programme approved by the Congress. His own strategy was, therefore, to push up the Congress as a whole gradually towards the acceptance of socialist ideals rather than playing a group politics which might eventually lead to political isolation. He was least interested in functioning as a group leader, nor was he willing to resort to political adventurism. His approach was mature, balanced and foresighted in tackling political problems. He believed that, "The Congress should be led out of the backwaters of pure politics by socialist elements who, rather than forming independent and sterile study centres, could exploit the Congress programme of mass action."<sup>124</sup> The outlook of the national Congress was, no doubt bourgeois, but it did represent the only effective revolutionary force in the country. This being so, Nehru naturally hoped that "The course of events and the participation in direct action would inevitably drive the Congress to a more radical ideology...."<sup>125</sup> His advice to his socialist friends was, therefore, to look at the movement in a historic perspective and to do everything to gain the confidence of the Congress.

Nehru was aware of the fact that behind the opponents of socialism, stood Gandhi whose dominant position and mass popularity could not be ignored in Congress politics. The greatness of Gandhi also lay in one thing that though he had never subscribed to socialist ideology he did not try to stifle the voice of the dissenting socialists in the Congress. Thus the Congress still remained "an active rebellious, many-sided organization full of variety of opinion, and not easily led this way or that."<sup>126</sup>

Nehru's socialist preachings and the emergence of a new Socialist Group (C.S.P.) had shaken the Congress to some extent. Apart from their total disapproval of socialism a group of nationalist

<sup>124</sup>S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 181.

<sup>125</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., pp. 197-98.

<sup>126</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 434.

leaders<sup>127</sup> who were better known as the Right-wing leaders, believed that class struggle, revolution and the like would endanger the organizational unity of the Congress. Though politically advanced, they were "extraordinarily backward socially."<sup>128</sup> Nehru thought that they were living with outmoded ideas and they refused to recognise the new emerging forces. "They distrust me very much because I talk of socialism",<sup>129</sup> wrote Nehru about them in one of his letters.

Though Nehru often stressed the need for restructuring the society on a socialist basis, and had described himself a 'socialist', the socialism remained vague and undefined throughout. He had "no clear conception of the social and economic theories on the basis of which the society was to be remodelled."<sup>130</sup> This was pointed out to him by Acharya Narendra Deva as early as 1929. While commenting on the failure of the 'Independence for India League', he observed that the ideas of most of the socialists including Nehru were "vague and indefinite" that they did not know "how to proceed about the business". As a result of this confusion their ideological conviction never grew deep.<sup>131</sup> Nehru accepted socialism not as a rigid and precise body of thought but as a general tendency with broad guidelines. His radical posture in the Congress politics did not make him sufficiently earnest in the methods of action that he ought to have pursued. Gandhi was aware of this weakness of Nehru and he knew well that the latter could not be bracketed with the other socialists. Commenting on Nehru's socialism Gandhi said: "Jawaharlal does not lend his name to any socialist group. He believes in socialism. He mixes with the socialists and consults them. But there is considerable

<sup>127</sup>This consisted of Vallabhbhai Patel, Rayendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, Acharya Kripalani, Govind Ballabh Pant and a few others. This group is generally referred to as "Old Guards" or as "Rightists". Gandhi himself characterised them as "those who represent the traditional view since 1920" and they represented his view, Gandhi's letter to Agatha Harrison, 30 April 1936, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 62, op. cit., p. 353.

<sup>128</sup>Nehru's letter to Chaitopadhyaya, Allahabad, 3 October 1928, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid

<sup>130</sup>Narendra Deva's letter to Nehru, 9 February 1929, in *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Bunch of Old Letters* (Asia Publishing House, 1958) p. 70.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid.

difference between their methods of work."<sup>122</sup> Nehru was a 'subjective socialist' for whom socialism was not inevitable, but could come only when a majority of the people supported it.<sup>123</sup> His failure to make such headway in his socialist programme was because of his personal loyalty to Gandhi which often proved to be a serious constraint. To Nehru, Gandhi stood both as a restraint and corrective. Inspite of their frequent clash of ideas, they maintained an excellent cordial relations in their personal life throughout.

<sup>122</sup>Gandhi's reply to questions put to him by Annada Babu, 5 May 1939, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 69 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1977), p. 211.

<sup>123</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Challenge to Critics of Socialism", in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 7, op. cit., p. 240.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

## **Nehru and Gandhi—Towards A Compromise**

NEHRU's political relationship with Gandhi assumed a new dimension after 1936. His commitment to socialism found a clear expression in his presidential address to the Lucknow Session of the Congress in April 1936. In a way that historic address marked the culmination of a distinct phase in his continuous struggle to build in the Congress a climate for socialism. Although his radicalism was long in the making, it came to a brilliant fruition during 1933-36. This was perhaps the most important period during which Nehru seriously thought on a scientific socialist line.<sup>1</sup> He then saw socialism in clear cut economic and class terms. His article, "Whither India", published in October 1933 and a number of letters addressed to Gandhi as well as his speeches and prison diary of this period bear ample testimony to it.

But the negative reaction of Gandhi and the dominant Congress leadership to his emphasis on socialism in his speech at Lucknow and an awareness of the possible political consequences rather forced him to review his self-conscious socialist standpoint and he began to realise the need for tempering his ideas to suit his surroundings. Unable to face the challenge from the dominant group and unwilling to remain isolated from Gandhi, Nehru had to reconcile himself to a more liberal position. Consequently during the next ten years from 1937 to 1947, he functioned almost as "the best shield of the Congress against leftwing groups and organisations by compromising many a time, much against his own earlier convictions."<sup>2</sup> And yet he did more than any one else to build in the Congress an awareness of economic issues.

<sup>1</sup>This point is elaborated by Bapan Chandra in his article on "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class 1936", in *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), Special Number, vol. 10, nos. 33, 34, 35, August 1975 p. 1307

<sup>2</sup>S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography—1889-1947*, vol. I (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 136-37.

## CONFLICTS AND COMPROMISE

Nehru's forthright criticism of the manner in which Congress was functioning brought him again into conflict with Gandhi and his supporters. In one of his letters to Gandhi in 1934 Nehru criticised the Congress leadership particularly the 'old guards'. The Congress from top to bottom, he told Mahatma, had become 'a caucus' where opportunism and vested interests freely flourished. Demagogues and reactionaries had found their comfortable place in it. The Working Committee was so indifferent that it could neither set forth any worthy ideal nor precisely define its own objective.<sup>3</sup> Referring to the Working Committee's resolution condemning socialism, Nehru remarked: "It seemed that the overmastering desire of the committee was somehow to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense."<sup>4</sup> The correspondence between Nehru and other leaders during 1935-36 clearly indicates how the latter felt irritated by Nehru's criticism. The Congress Socialist Party had also revolted against Gandhi and had been consistently directing their attack on his followers. It was in this background that Nehru assumed his new responsibility as the President of the Congress in 1936. Despite his criticism against the Congress leadership, he was elected with the full support of Gandhi. However, his election evoked certain interesting comments in certain quarters. M R. Masani, a joint secretary of the Congress Socialist Party conveyed to Nehru in Europe the general feeling that "the Rightists, in making him president expected him to impede the advance of the socialist movement in India."<sup>5</sup> Even the Liberals thought that "Gandhi was hiring Nehru to kill the socialist cobra."<sup>6</sup>

The socialists looked to Nehru with high hopes and aspirations while the Rightists and Liberals, with fear and suspicion. His own feeling was that, though the Congress still remained what it was, his election "did mean that there was a general desire for a more radical policy and that socialist ideas were spreading in the

<sup>3</sup>Nehru's letter to Gandhi, 14 August 1934, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Sketch of Old Letters* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958), p. 115.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>5</sup>Masani to Nehru, 10 January 1935, quoted in B N. Parikh, *Nehru* (London: Macmillan Co. Ltd., 1977), pp. 190-91.

<sup>6</sup>Jayakar to Patel, 26 June 1936, Jayakar Papers, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 191.

country."<sup>77</sup> But he assumed office at a time when the political atmosphere was sputtered with bitterness and conflict. Gandhi while sponsoring him for the presidentship, felt confident that, "though Jawaharlal is extreme in his presentation of his methods, he is sober in action."<sup>78</sup>

As president, Nehru thought that his first effort was to bring about some kind of an amity in an apparently strife torn organization. India could not get along without either of these groups and the need of the hour was that the two must cooperate in the struggle against imperialism. He, therefore, decided to play a more conciliatory role. Political compulsions brought about a sudden shift in his attitude. The earlier position was that the movement could be consolidated only when it was directed on a class war basis. That standpoint now seemed to him rather risky and impracticable. Without the support of the Rightists, nothing much could be done. He became conscious of the value of that group in the Congress. They were "men with prestige and influence among the masses and the experience of having guided the struggle for many years."<sup>79</sup> It was wrong, according to Nehru, to dub them all as Rightists, "politically they were far more left and they were confirmed anti-imperialists."<sup>80</sup> He was fully aware of their strength which was mainly derived from Gandhi who always supported them from outside the organization. At the same time he realised the predominant position of Gandhi without whom there could be no meaningful political action.

As compared with these Gandhites, the socialists were in a weak and insignificant minority although they "represented a vital, a growing section, and their influence was spreading especially among the youth."<sup>81</sup> Politically, he felt that he was closer to them because it was their ideology and objectives that represented the future. Yet he was highly critical of the Congress-Socialists. They spoke in a borrowed language from 'Western socialist literature' which usually went over the head of the rank and file of the Congress.

<sup>77</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *Where Are We?* (Allahabad and London: Kitabistan, 1939), pp. 23-24.

<sup>78</sup>Gandhi's letter to Agatha Harrison, 30 April 1936, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>79</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *Where Are We?*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*

About the vast middle groups, his idea was that they were "politically left, socially vague and undecided....."<sup>12</sup>

Understanding the gravity of the situation, Nehru, as president, performed his first task of reconstituting his Working Committee. Though he had chosen "a majority of those who represent the traditional view i.e. from 1920,"<sup>13</sup> it failed to work with a team spirit. Differences began to revolve round the question how far the Congress could commit itself to socialism in its programme. The president appeared to be out of tune with the majority of the Working Committee. Bitter bickerings among its members rendered that body more or less ineffective. Nehru found himself virtually isolated. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, a close friend of Nehru, and many others expressed their doubts whether Nehru would be able to have a smooth sail in the face of stiff opposition from the Gandhites. They also thought that the Working Committee constituted by him was "bound to be more reactionary than the one it had replaced."<sup>14</sup>

#### **ON THE QUESTION OF ACCEPTING OFFICE UNDER THE ACT OF 1935**

The main political issue before the Congress at that time was whether it should contest the elections and accept office under the constitution of 1935. Nehru's opposition to the Act of 1935 was well known, and for him acceptance of office would not only be a retrograde step but might even lead to the disintegration of the Congress. Referring to this issue in his presidential address in 1936 Nehru said : "It seems to me that the only logical consequence of the Congress policy.. is to have nothing to do with office and ministry. Any deviation from this would mean a reversal of that policy."<sup>15</sup> On the question of the Congress participation in the elections held in 1937, there was difference of opinion between Gandhi and Nehru. Gandhi was in favour of it. "India", he said, "is still a prison, but the superintendent allows the prisoners to

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>13</sup>Gandhi's letter to Agatha Hassen, 30 April 1936, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>14</sup>Rafi Ahmed Kidwai's letter to Nehru, 20 April 1936, in *Ibid.*, pp. 174-75

<sup>15</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Presidential Address", in Narendra Nath Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register* (July—December 1936), vol. 2 (Calcutta: The Annual Register Office), p. 227.

elect the officials who run the jail."<sup>11</sup> But Nehru was not very happy about it when he said : "If we wish the country to advance towards independence, if we wish the country not to be disillusioned, then we must think many times before we take any steps which increase this reformist mentality. Any idea of acceptance of office tends to reformism."<sup>12</sup> In his presidential address he said he was willing to contest the elections for the purpose of propaganda. The Congress however decided to participate in the elections the results of which were announced in February 1937. The Congress led the polls in nine of the eleven provinces. On the question of accepting office, which became a hot issue after the election, there was again stalemate on account of sharp division among the leaders. Gandhi urged the Congressmen to shoulder the responsibility, but Nehru and Subhas Bose disagreed. Gandhi persuaded them to give their approval on condition that the Governors gave an assurance that they would not interfere with the administration. At last after weeks of mediation with the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, Gandhi extracted the required promise in June 1937.<sup>13</sup>

It should be remembered that the Working Committee's decision to accept office was a big shock to Nehru. What happened in the meeting was that his own resolution was nullified by the one dictated by Gandhi. Referring to Nehru's reaction to the Working Committee's decision, M. N. Roy wrote later: "On the third day late in the afternoon, he walked in and threw himself in the bed, a broken man, nearly on the point of crying." "I must resign", he said, "I enquired" "Why", ? "Have they rejected your draft ?" "No", "he exclaimed, in impotent rage"; "they have accepted the whole damn thing, supplemented by a short paragraph dictated by Gandhiji, which invalidates the rest of the resolution."<sup>14</sup>

The Congress subsequently in its open session not only rejected some of his important recommendations but also gave its full

<sup>11</sup>Quoted in Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi—A Study in Revolution* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1968), p. 336.

<sup>12</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "On Acceptance of Office", speech at the Subjects Committee meeting, 11 April 1936. In S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 7 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1975), pp. 167-68.

<sup>13</sup>Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi—A Study in Revolution*, op. cit., p. 337.

<sup>14</sup>M. N. Roy, "Jawaharlal Nehru" *Twentieth Century* (February 1952), quoted in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 218.

support to the old leadership. Nehru now realised that he was in a minority in the Congress and he was not certain about his future as president of the Congress. In his letter to Krishna Menon, conveying his sad predicament, Nehru wrote on 18 June 1936: "I am being attacked and criticised by a variety of people, Big business, Liberals, Responsivists, some Congressmen and of course our beloved Government. . . . It is a tiring business to carry on wars on numerous fronts, and there are few to help. But I carry on. . . ."<sup>20</sup> By the end of June the crisis took a serious turn when seven members of the Working Committee<sup>21</sup> sent their resignation to Nehru. A split thus appeared to be imminent. The immediate provocation was his speeches emphasizing socialism as well as his statement that the Working Committee, as constituted by him, was not of his choice. They also protested against the propaganda on the political front, being carried on by Nehru and other socialists, and thus, according to them, had considerably weakened the Congress.<sup>22</sup>

Realising a possible danger to the movement and the organization, Gandhi at once intervened and resolved the crisis with remarkable skill. He was furious at Nehru, and did rebuke him for his 'arrogance, intolerance and lack of a sense of humour'. "If they are guilty of intolerance", Gandhi frankly told Nehru, "you have more than your share of it. The country should not be made to suffer for your mutual intolerance."<sup>23</sup> Gandhi reminded him that he was unanimously elected with their support, and that he was not yet in power though he held the office of the president. "To put you in office", Gandhi added, "was an attempt to find you in power quicker than you would otherwise have been."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Nehru to Krishna Menon, 19 June 1936, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 7, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

<sup>21</sup>All the meeting of the Working Committee held at Wardha on 29 June, the differences had come into the open that seven members—Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, Jatamdas Desalaram, Jamnalal Bajaj, Vallabhbhai Patel, J. B. Kripalani and S. D. Deo—found it necessary to submit their resignation.

<sup>22</sup>Rajendra Prasad and Six Others' letter to Nehru, 26 June 1936, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bush of Old Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>23</sup>Gandhi's letter to Nehru, Wardha, 1 July 1936, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 63 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1976), pp. 127-28.

<sup>24</sup>Gandhi's letter to Nehru, Segou, 15 July 1936, *ibid.*, p. 145.

Gandhi insisted on the withdrawal of all resignations, and did not like the idea of referring the matter to the AICC on the ground that such an action would demoralise the whole organisation. He warned his colleagues not to indulge in petty wranglings and hopefully said that "... during the remainder of the year all wrangling should cease and no resignation should take place."<sup>25</sup>

Though Nehru had to compromise on many occasions on various issues under the pressure and influence of Gandhi, his presidency during 1936 and 1937 gave a radical momentum to the Congress politics. That opportunity was fairly utilised to direct a virulent attack on capitalism and imperialism. The Congress election manifesto prepared mainly by him and the agrarian document drafted with the help of his socialist friends fairly reflected his anti-feudal and anti-imperialist ideas. This was appreciated by E.M.S. Namboodiripad when he wrote: "Nehru's presidency enormously strengthened the forces of the left. Ideas of socialism, of militant and uncompromising anti-imperialism, of anti-lordship, and anti-capitalist struggles these began to grip the people on a scale never before thought possible."<sup>26</sup>

#### ON NATIVE STATES AND PRINCELY RULERS

Under the Act of 1935, there was the proposal for a federal set up at the Centre, and the possibility of establishing such a federation inevitably brought in the Congress policy towards the native states. As in many other cases, Gandhi and Nehru held conflicting views on the vital question. The traditional approach of the Congress since the days of non-cooperation movement, was one of non-interference in the internal affairs of the states. Gandhi, who wanted to stick to this policy, favoured a blanket ban on Congress participation in the people's struggle in the princely states. But Nehru had an altogether different idea and he made it abundantly clear in his presidential address on 29 December 1929. "The Indian States cannot live apart from the rest of India, and their rulers must, unless they accept their inevitable limitations, go the way of

<sup>25</sup>Gandhi's letter to Nehru, Wardha, 3 July 1936, *ibid.*, p. 127

<sup>26</sup>E M S. Namboodiripad, *Mahatma and the Irom* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1968), p. 74

others who thought like them. And the only people who have a right to determine the future of the states, must be the people of those states including the rulers. The Congress which claims self-determination, cannot deny it to the people of the states."<sup>27</sup> Gandhi on the other hand, in his letter of July 1934 to N C. Kelkar, reiterated his earlier stand that the policy of non-interference was quite sound. Nehru did not like Gandhi's adherence to such a hush-hush policy, in spite of the state governments' wholly unprovoked attack on the Congress. Following Gandhi's advice, the Congress did not utter a single word in public when the government of Travancore banned the National Congress and stopped all its meetings and enrolment of members. Reacting to this passive attitude of the Congress, Nehru suggested that the Congress should "stand up for the elementary rights of the people of the states and to criticise their wholesale suppression."<sup>28</sup>

The problem of Indian states, however, assumed a new dimension in October 1937 when the All India Congress Committee in its Calcutta session passed a 'resolution'<sup>29</sup> condemning state governments' policy of repression in Mysore and appealing to all people of Indian states and British India to support and encourage the people of Mysore in their fight for their right of self-determination. Apparently annoyed by this Gandhi pulled up Nehru and severely criticised him. In the columns of *Haryan*, he not only wrote against the Mysore resolution but also stated that it was "ultra vires"<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>27</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address, Lahore, 29 December 1933, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 4 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), pp. 192-93.

<sup>28</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1955), p. 532.

<sup>29</sup>"This meeting of the AICC expresses an emphatic protest against the ruthless policy of repression as indicated by the inauguration of various restrictive and prohibitory orders and political prosecutions launched in the Mysore state and also against the suppression of civil rights and liberties.... This meeting sends its fraternal greetings to their people of Mysore and wishes them all success in their legitimate non-violent struggle and appeals to the people of Indian states and British India to give all support and encouragement to the people of Mysore in their struggle against the state for right of self-determination." Partabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress (1933-1947)*, vol. 2 (Bombay: Padma Publications, 1947), pp. 68-69.

<sup>30</sup>S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 8 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976), p. 571.

This actually meant that Nehru's action in sponsoring the resolution was condemned. He had also stated that the resolution amounted to a breach of truth and non-violence.

Obviously not convinced by Gandhi's arguments, Nehru wrote to him on the subject on 14 November 1937. "I am writing all this to you as I want to be clear in my own mind what our policy is. You have censured the AICC and me for the course we pursued. I have not yet understood how and where I was wrong and so long as I do not understand it, I can hardly act otherwise."<sup>21</sup> Gandhi's reply was that the Mysore resolution actually violated the letter and spirit of the Lucknow resolution of 1935 and therefore he still preferred to maintain his criticism against the sponsors of the resolution for forgetting the self-imposed limitation of the Congress.

Though Nehru's initiative on this issue suffered an initial setback, his consistent opposition to the traditional Gandhian policy towards the native states ultimately paved the way for the adoption of a new policy in the Haripura session of the Congress held in February 1938. According to this policy, the Congress changed its old policy of 'non-interference' to one of encouraging the states' people to fight for responsible government.

#### ON PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Equally interesting were the differences between Nehru and Gandhi on the question of planning and economic development. Nehru had understood the significance of planning as a wellthought out approach to strengthen the base and pace of progress. He stood for an integrated and balanced approach to planning with least rigidity and dogmatism. He took up the chairmanship of the National Planning Committee in October 1938, and as chairman he worked vigorously for the preparation of an integrated national plan. This was, however, the starting point of his personal involvement in the planning work in India. But the work was of great interest to him and he wrote: "As we proceeded with this work, it grew and grew, till it embraced almost every phase of national activity."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Nehru to Gandhi, 14 November 1937, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, op. cit., p. 255.

<sup>22</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 607.

But Nehru's enthusiasm for planning was not shared by Gandhi who was his strong critic on this question. Despite all the arguments of Nehru to allay his fears, Gandhi called upon his followers to stay away from the planning committee. "I have advised you about Jawaharlal's invitation. In my opinion, the whole of his planning is a waste of effort. But he cannot be satisfied with anything that is not big."<sup>23</sup> Gandhi was highly sceptical about the utility of the planning body, and he even doubted whether it was functioning in accordance with the original resolution of the Working Committee.<sup>24</sup> The committee did a lot of work over the years 1938-39 and 1940. Its work was disrupted when the Civil Disobedience Movement began in November 1940.

But Gandhi had no appreciation for the labourious work done by the Planning Committee. He expressed his wholly negative attitude and resentment over it and this was conveyed to Nehru via his letter of 11 August 1939. "I have never been able to understand or appreciate the labours of the committee. . . It has appeared to me that much money and labour are being wasted on an effort which will bring forth little or no fruit..."<sup>25</sup> Despite all his disagreement and criticism, Nehru succeeded in preparing a comprehensive report based on the findings of about seventeen sub-committees. But what ultimately saved him from a possible embarrassing situation was the outbreak of war, and his work came to an abrupt end when he was arrested and imprisoned. However, in order to keep the issue alive and also to popularise the concept of economic planning, Nehru suggested that the sub committee's report be published. Gandhi rejected the proposal when it was referred to him. Nehru's interest in planning continued, despite interruptions in the working of the committee and one of the major steps that he took on joining the Interim Government in September 1946, was to appoint an 'Advisory Planning Board'.

<sup>23</sup>Gandhi to Arunachal Kaur, 29 June 1939, quoted in A H. Hanson, *The Precursors of Planning* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 280

<sup>24</sup>In August 1937, the Working Committee contemplated the formation of an Expert Committee to explore the possibilities of an All India Industrial Plan, and to this end the President was authorised to convene a conference of the concerned. The conference took place on second and third October 1938. For details see Paitabh Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress (1933-47)*, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>25</sup>Gandhi to Nehru, 11 August 1939, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, *op. cit.*, pp. 378-79.

## INDUSTRIALIZATION AND ECONOMIC POLICY

On the important question of India's industrialization Nehru and Gandhi had certain vital differences. Nehru emphasised the importance of large scale industries and always held strong views about it. According to him "there can be no planning if such planning does not include big industries."<sup>34</sup> He stood for quick industrialization of the country as he thought that it might lead to a general increase in the wealth and prosperity of the people. He believed that nothing would ensure a better standard of life for the people than large scale industrialization.

I believe in industrialization and the big machine and I should like to see factories spring up all over India. I want to increase the wealth of India and the standards of living of the Indian people and it seems to me that this can only be done by the application of science to industry resulting in large scale industrialization.<sup>35</sup>

It may be noted that Nehru did not ignore the importance of cottage and small-scale industries while pleading for large-scale industrialization. He supported the Khadi movement as well as the village industries movement for social, political and economic reasons'. In his view there was no conflict between the two. But he confessed at the same time that "in this matter, I do not represent Gandhi's viewpoint to any large extent."<sup>36</sup>

Gandhi was initially sceptical about the use and importance of big machines because he believed that it would inevitably lead to the concentration of power and riches, though later his "attitude to the use of machinery seemed to undergo a gradual change."<sup>37</sup> His main emphasis was on the development of small-scale industries at the village level in order to ward off the problem of rural poverty

<sup>34</sup>Quoted in H K. Paranjape, *Jawaharlal Nehru and the Planning Commission* (New Delhi, Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1964), p. 3

<sup>35</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Some Criticisms Considered", *Recent Essays and Writings* (Allahabad Kitabstan, 1947), p. 37.

<sup>36</sup>Nehru to Krishna Krupanidhi, Allahabad, 29 September 1939, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, op. cit., p. 361.

<sup>37</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta, The Signet Press, 1946, p. 439).

and unemployment.<sup>40</sup> But when a controversy arose about the respective role and importance of large and small scale industries Nehru took the view that there was no serious conflict between the two. "I feel therefore that it is inevitable and desirable to encourage the use and development of the big machines and thus to industrialize India", he wrote on the subject: "I am convinced at the same time that no amount of industrialization in this way will do away with the necessity of developing cottage industries on a large scale in India and this not merely as feeders but as independent units. ..The problem, therefore, becomes one of coordination between the two. It is a question of planning by the State."<sup>41</sup>

Though he recognized the need for rural development and labour intensive technology, Nehru had no admiration for Gandhi's backward looking ruralism. As he was too familiar with Gandhi's critique of modernization, he could easily make a creative use of it. Without rejecting mechanization, as Gandhi did, Nehru tried to evolve an Indian model of the modern industrial society by incorporating some of the elements of Gandhian thought.<sup>42</sup> In fact his whole approach to the problem of industrialization was sufficiently flexible.

#### ON THE LEADERSHIP OF SUBHAS BOSE

Much against the wishes of Gandhi, the election of Subhas Bose as president on 29 January 1939, created a new crisis in the Congress. Twelve leading supporters of Gandhi lost no time to revolt against him and resigned from the Working Committee.<sup>43</sup> But they successfully managed to get a resolution passed in the Tripuri session of the Congress that Bose should constitute the Working

<sup>40</sup>Gandhi, however gradually moved away from his earlier views as presented in 'Hind Swaraj' and accepted the need for key industries under state ownership. This he did without deviating from his basic assumptions. For details of the evolution of Gandhi's ideas on the subject see Buddhadeva Bhattacharya, *Evolution of the Political Philosophy of Gandhi* (Calcutta: Calcutta Book House, 1969), pp. 205-16.

<sup>41</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Beach of Old Letters*, no. 477, pp. 382-83.

<sup>42</sup>P C. Joshi, "Gandhi and Nehru—The Challenge of a New Society", in B R Nanda, et al., *Gandhi and Nehru* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 49.

<sup>43</sup>See Chapter IV (Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose).

Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhi. Bose accepted the resolution, but insisted that his own men be included. The Working Committee refused to cooperate on this and the result was that the work of the organization came to a sudden halt.

Nehru found himself in a predicament. His views were unwelcome to both sides. Though he was critical of Bose and his style of functioning, he did not like to join the group in its effort to push him out of office. His disagreement with Gandhi on this point was quite evident when he wrote: "I think now, as I thought in Delhi, that you should accept Subhas as president. To try to push him out seems to me to be an exceedingly wrong step."<sup>44</sup> He differed with Gandhi when the latter kept on insisting that Subhas Bose should form a wholly homogeneous Working Committee. His view was that the idea of homogeneity will not always lead to peaceful and effective working. "After all we must remember", he told Gandhi, "that by having a homogeneous Executive we do not create a homogeneous Congress."<sup>45</sup> Nehru actually pleaded with Gandhi to find a way out to end the stalemate in the Congress. He thought that the crusade against the 'Rightists' which Bose was carrying on and his 'modus operandi' might lead to a complete break with Gandhi, which under the circumstances, was most disastrous to the nationalist movement. But Gandhi remained uncompromising and his adamant attitude finally compelled Subhas Bose to resign his presidentship.

However the significant point in this episode was that Nehru adopted a purely individualistic attitude to the problem. On the one hand he disapproved the manner in which Bose was being hounded out after his election; on the other, he was not prepared to throw his full weight in support of Bose. He was not only critical of him but also preferred to remain with the opponents of Bose at Tripuri. Subhas Bose naturally felt that Nehru did more harm than the activities of the twelve stalwarts.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Nehru to Gandhi, Allahabad, 17 April 1939, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 370

<sup>45</sup>Ibid

<sup>46</sup>Subhas Bose to his nephew, 17 April 1939, quoted in N.G. Gog, *Freedom's Quest* (Delhi, 1969), p. 153

## DIFFERENCES ON THE WAR POLICY AND Cripps' PROPOSALS

The outbreak of war in September 1939 added a new dimension to the national politics. Gandhi and Nehru again differed on the question of the Congress attitude towards the war. Responding to the invitation of the Viceroy for an interview on 5 September 1939, Gandhi met him and offered his moral sympathy and cooperation in the war.<sup>47</sup> But he did not speak on behalf of the Congress which was yet to consider the issue. Nehru's attitude was different. He demanded from the British Government a statement of war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism. In the meantime the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha for a week and after four days of discussion, a long statement was issued on war crisis on 14 September 1939.<sup>48</sup> Gandhi found himself isolated in the meeting, which accepted with minor modifications, the draft prepared by Nehru on the Congress attitude towards the war. "I was sorry", said Gandhi about his position there, "to find myself alone in thinking that whatever support was to be given to the British, should be given unconditionally."<sup>49</sup> It may be noted that Gandhi's approach was wholly humanitarian and from the point of view of non-violence while Nehru and others on the committee were not inclined to think on that line. However, at the end he commended the Working Committee's statement drafted by Nehru.

In his draft Nehru reaffirmed the position of the Congress that India could not associate herself in a war said to be fought for democratic freedom when that freedom was completely denied to her. It also emphasised the anti-fascist commitment of the Congress when it stood for its own national freedom in the larger world context.

The arrival of Sir Stafford Cripps in March 1942 raised some hope of an early settlement of the Indian problem particularly the problem of India's participation in the British war efforts. The

<sup>47</sup>Gandhi's statement after his interview with the Viceroy, 5 September 1939, in *Congress and War Crisis* (Allahabad, All India Congress Committee, 1942), p. 10.

<sup>48</sup>For details of the Working Committee's statement drafted by Nehru see *ibid.*, pp. 14-19.

<sup>49</sup>Gandhi quoted in, D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 5 (Bombay Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri and D. G. Tendulkar, 1962), p. 204.

negotiations between Cripps and the members of the Working Committee began on 25 March and ended on 10 April 1942. Though Cripps interviewed Gandhi, his discussion with the Congress was mainly carried on through Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Both Gandhi and Nehru approached the Cripps' proposal<sup>50</sup> from different points of view. Though Gandhi was not present throughout the period of negotiation, he did not favour the acceptance of the proposal from the beginning. In fact he described the declaration embodied in the proposal as "a postdated cheque."<sup>51</sup> His opposition was more because of his general aversion to war than because of the proposals as such. In fact he was not inclined to accept anything which might involve Indian war. He also did not like the offer contained in the proposal that "after the war, Congress and the Muslim League would be given an opportunity to settle the communal issue."<sup>52</sup>

Nehru was not only inclined to consider the proposal favourably but also willing to negotiate the conditions for India's participation in the war. He was seriously concerned about the repercussions of the war in Europe and Asia, and was greatly worried about the future of democracy there. He not only sympathised, but he wanted to help them as much as he could. But the general feeling in the country was so strong against the British at that time that Nehru was hesitant to take a tough line on this issue.

The Cripps proposals were however rejected by the Congress Working Committee after heated debate for an unusually long period. It is generally believed that the rejection of the proposals was largely due to the strong opposition of Gandhi. According to Maulana Azad, Gandhi made his position very clear to the members and asked them to decide the issue on its own merit. He also revealed that the Cripps Mission failed mainly on the question of defence alone.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Cripps' proposal essentially dealt with the future i.e. after the cessation of war. During the war the only change was about the composition of the Executive Council. For details of the Cripps' proposals, see V P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1957), pp. 124-25.

<sup>51</sup>D G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mahatma Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 6 (Bombay: Vishalbharti K. Jhaveri and D G. Tendulkar, 1953), p. 89.

<sup>52</sup>Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1959), p. 50.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

## ON THE QUESTION OF GUERRILLA WARFARE AGAINST JAPAN

The All India Congress Committee met at Allahabad from 27 April to 1 May 1942. The meeting took place in a tense atmosphere created by the threat of a Japanese attack on India. Though Gandhi was not present at Allahabad, he had sent his draft resolution<sup>24</sup> from Wardha for the consideration of the Working Committee. The Committee discussed in detail Gandhi's resolution along with certain amendments proposed by Rajendra Prasad. However on 1 May 1942, Nehru moved an alternative resolution which was finally passed.<sup>25</sup> This resolution<sup>26</sup> which contained no reference to Japan or to Britain's inability to defend India, reflected his surrender to the viewpoint of Gandhi who was most emphatic on the question of resisting the possible Japanese invasion through non-violent non-cooperation. Nehru had earlier preached a violent resistance including guerrilla warfare against the Japanese

<sup>24</sup>In his draft resolution, Gandhi stated, "Britain is incapable of defending India . . . The Indian army has been maintained up till now mainly to hold India in subjugation. It has been completely segregated from the general population who can in no sense regard it as their own. . . . Japan's quarrel is not with India. She is warning against the British Empire. India's participation in the war has not been with the consent of the representatives of the Indian people. If India were freed, her first step would probably be to negotiate with Japan . . . This Committee desires to assure the Japanese Government and people that India bears no enmity either towards Japan or towards any other nation. . . ." For the text of the Draft Resolution sent by Gandhi for the consideration of the AICC at Allahabad on 27 April 1942, see *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 76 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1979), pp. 63-65.

<sup>25</sup>D. P. Mishra, *Living an Era: India's March to Freedom*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1975), p. 386.

<sup>26</sup>In his draft resolution Nehru stated, "India's participation in the war was a purely British act imposed upon the Indian people without the consent of their representatives. While India has no quarrel with the people of any country, she has repeatedly declared her antipathy to Nazism and Fascism as to imperialism. . . . The Committee repudiates the idea that freedom can come to India through interference or invasion by any foreign nation. . . . In case an invasion takes place it must be resisted. Such resistance can only take the form of non-violent-non-cooperation. . . . The committee would therefore expect the people of India to offer complete non-violent non-cooperation to the invading forces. . ." For the full text of the resolution, see N. N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register* (July-December 1942) vol. 2 (Calcutta: Annual Register Office), pp. 203-06.

whose occupation of South-East Asia had brought India into the frontline of battle. When Rangoon fell on 7 March 1942 it appeared that Japanese invasion of Bengal and Madras was imminent. It was in that precarious situation that Nehru advocated violent resistance including the use of citizen armies, home guards and guerrilla warfare, and Rajagopalachari wanted arms and military training for the whole nation.

But Gandhi sharply reacted against the views of Nehru and Rajagopalachari and wrote in *Harijan* on 26 April 1942: "I am sorry that he (Nehru) has developed a fancy for guerrilla warfare... Twenty two years' incessant preaching and practice of non-violence however imperfect it has been, could not suddenly be obliterated by the mere wish of Jawaharlal and Rajaji. The guerrilla warfare can take us nowhere."<sup>57</sup> He was all for India offering non-violent non-cooperation to meet the threat of Japan and Germany. But Nehru, far from appreciating Gandhi's view, was decidedly against the use and technique of non-violence to fight an international war. He thought it was meaningless even to start a mass civil disobedience movement when the war was on India's door step. In the unprecedented situation of tension and distress, Nehru thought of even disowning completely the official Congress policy towards the war. However with much pressure and persuasion he was prevented from resorting to that extreme step.<sup>58</sup> He carried on his arguments with Gandhi for days together. The force of circumstances gradually brought about a noticeable change in Gandhi's attitude and he restrained from pressing his viewpoint. In August 1942 when the Working Committee adopted the historic resolution for the 'Quit India' movement, "Gandhi's nationalism and intense desire for freedom made him even agree to C (c) participation in the war, if India could function as a free country. In the conflict between that principle of non-violence which had become his lifeblood and meaning of existence, and India's freedom which was a dominating and consuming passion for him, the scales inclined towards the latter."<sup>59</sup>

Before agreeing to support the 'Quit India' movement Nehru persuaded Gandhi to accept the position that the Allied troops

<sup>57</sup>Gandhi, *Harijan*, 26 April 1942, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 76, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>58</sup>Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, op. cit., p. 65

<sup>59</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., pp. 540-41

would remain on Indian soil during the war and the provisional government of free India would do everything possible to fight against Fascism. For Gandhi with his boundless faith in non-violence, "this was", as Nehru remarked, "a bitter pill".<sup>60</sup> Nehru's disagreement with Gandhi was mainly on the question of the applicability of the principle of non-violence in a situation created by the war. He too, like most other leaders, had recognised from the beginning, the doctrine of non-violence as the solid foundation of the nationalist movement. But he had not accepted it as the only effective method of action for all times and under all circumstances. That was precisely his frame of mind when he said: "The Congress had long ago accepted the principle and practice of non-violence in its application to our struggle for freedom and in building up unity in the nation. At no time had it gone beyond that position or applied the principle to defence from external aggression or internal disorder."<sup>61</sup>

It is significant to remember that Nehru's conflict with Gandhi during the war period was largely on account of his own reading of the fast changing international situation. He wanted India to do her utmost to combat the menace of Fascism and Nazism. His visit to China shortly before the outbreak of the war in the autumn of 1939 and his discussions with Chiang Kai-shek who visited India in February 1942, had strengthened his anti-fascist feelings.<sup>62</sup> He also thought that the imperialist war would ultimately pave the way for a new world order and if India could rightly play her part, she could influence the change for better.

Gandhi, invariably, used to accept Nehru's advice on international problems and publicly praised him for his intimate knowledge of world affairs. It was under his influence that the Congress condemned the fascist aggression in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain and Czechoslovakia, and severely criticised the Western Powers for their policy of appeasement. Yet Nehru sometimes felt that Gandhi often accepted his views "without wholly agreeing with it."<sup>63</sup> Since Gandhi had absolute faith only in non-violent action,

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 576.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 536.

<sup>62</sup> At the end of his visit Marshal Chiang Kai-shek made an appeal to the people of India for help in the war.

<sup>63</sup> Nehru to Subhas Bose, 4 February 1939, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976), p. 483.

it was his firm conviction that it could serve well even in the face of external aggression. Although he too believed that Fascism and Nazism were essentially based on the cult of violence, he refused to accept the view that violence could be met with counter-violence. In fact he stood for complete non-participation in the war under all circumstances.

Early in January 1942, Gandhi, while addressing the members of the All India Congress Committee at Wardha, referred to the attempt of his colleagues to abandon altogether non-violence to win swaraj. At one stage he even thought of dividing the AICC, but he realized that it would not only be a grave mistake but also an act of violence.<sup>44</sup> Referring to the talk of his estranged relation with Nehru, Gandhi frankly told the members:

Somebody suggested that Pandit Jawaharlal and I were estranged. It will require much more differences of opinion to estrange us. We have had differences from the moment we became co-workers, and yet I have said for some years and say now that not Rajaji but Jawaharlal be my successor. He says that he does not understand my language, and that he speaks a language foreign to me. This may or may not be true. But language is no bar to a union of hearts. And I know this that when I am gone he will speak my language.<sup>45</sup>

#### DIVERGENT VIEWS ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMME AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The sudden release of Gandhi from detention on 5 May 1944 "marked the end of the Gandhian era"<sup>46</sup> and the beginning of a new one. The events that followed the aborted civil disobedience movement (Quit India movement of 1942) gradually ushered in a new era in the struggle for independence. In an atmosphere of growing violence and hatred created mainly by the imperialist war,

<sup>44</sup>D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma—Life of Mahadev Karmachand Gandhi*; vol. 6 (Bombay: Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri and D.G. Tendulkar, 1953), p. 49

<sup>45</sup>"Gandhi's Speech on the Bardoli Resolution", quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>46</sup>Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. 4 (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Publications Division, 1972), p. 398.

the nationalists became more and more sceptical about the Gandhian method of nonviolent non-cooperation. They were convinced of the pressing necessity for a review of the Gandian method. Leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose were the forerunners of the new trend.<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi who was aware of this new trend, noticed that many of his trusted colleagues were fast drifting away from him. He was no longer in a position to decide or dictate. Though depressed by this development, he continued to nurse the hope of winning them over. Immediately after his release in 1944, Gandhi took the initiative for exploratory talks with Nehru and others on the social and economic programme of the Congress after independence. "I want to write about the difference of outlook between us", he wrote to Nehru, in October 1945. "If the difference is fundamental then ... the public should be .. made aware of it. It would be detrimental to our work for swaraj .. to keep them in the dark."<sup>12</sup>

It may be noted that difference between the two persisted all along on the socio-economic programme of the Congress, although Gandhi's programme of action was largely accepted by Nehru and others. Probably, Nehru's realistic appraisal of the struggle then suggested no other alternative. But in the changed situation, "with freedom round the corner, a reexamination of the fundamental position became a matter of supreme necessity".<sup>13</sup> Gandhi was very clear about his vision of a future India. But that dream of an ideal village community life in which truth and non-violence would govern supreme, had to be translated into reality. Prompted solely by these considerations, Gandhi wrote to Nehru "... I am an old man... I have, therefore, named you as my heir. I must, however, understand my heir and my heir should understand me. Then alone shall I be content".<sup>14</sup>

Nehru's reply to this was characteristically in a different tone and language. He plainly told Gandhi that the basic question before the country was not 'one of truth versus untruth or non-violence versus violence'. He also expressed his inability to share the view that a village should necessarily be the symbol of truth.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid

<sup>12</sup>Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, vol. 2 (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1958), p. 544.

<sup>13</sup>Gandhi, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 544.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid

and non-violence. While admitting the relevance of peaceful and cooperative methods in the realisation of the national objective, Nehru asserted, "A village, normally speaking is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, in his scheme of things, priority was to be given to the fundamental issue of providing the basic minimum of 'food, clothing, housing, education, sanitation, etc.' for all. He also conveyed to Gandhi about the inevitability of modernization for development and the necessity to provide equal opportunity for all. Nehru was quite emphatic on the point when he said "I do not think it is possible for India to be really independent unless she is a technically advanced country".<sup>22</sup>

He was clear in his mind that the Congress should not get entangled in unnecessary arguments over such matters which could help create only confusions in its rank and file. However these questions would have to be considered by the representative institutions of free India. Though Nehru's letter was somewhat vague and indefinite, it did reveal his thinking on the subject. Gandhi tried to pin-point the issue again in their next meeting about a month later, but the discussion could not be resumed owing to the fast changing political situation and the communal disturbances.

#### ON THE USE OF FORCE IN MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER

On 2 September 1946 Jawaharlal Nehru and his colleagues took charge of the Interim Government. With the formation of the Interim Government, the attitude of the Muslim League became so aggressively tough that it soon provoked a worst communal situation in the country. Earlier on 29 July, the Council of the All India Muslim League had passed a resolution deciding upon direct action, and consequent upon that the League observed 16 August as direct action day. This led to a series of communal clashes and violence in many parts of the country particularly in Bengal and

<sup>21</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's letter to Gandhi, Allahabad, 4 October 1945, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 14 New Delhi, Orient (Longman, 1982), p. 554.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 555

Bihar, Gandhi felt ashamed and hurt at the communal riots and when he learned about it in Bihar, he at once informed Nehru of the grave situation there. Nehru immediately rushed to the troubled area for an on the spot study of the situation. He warned the trouble makers that Government would put down violence by force and made it clear that the armed forces would be used to suppress the riots. He threatened to use even aerial bombing if the situation so demanded.<sup>13</sup>

On 5 November 1946, Gandhi criticised Nehru's action of calling in the military to suppress the riots. "That was the way of the British", he said, "By suppressing the riots with the aid of the military, they would be suppressing India's freedom".<sup>14</sup> he added. On the same day Rajendra Prasad announced the decision of Gandhi to observe a fast unto death, if the communal disturbance did not stop in Bihar within twenty four hours. Next day just before his departure for 'Noakhali' he issued a statement addressed "To Bihar".

In his speech on 6 November 1946 at Gaya Nehru warned "If forces of retaliation do not cease aerial bombardment would be resorted to and Government would maintain order at any cost. If neighbours cannot confide in neighbours, Swaraj would be meaningless".<sup>15</sup> On the same day Shyama Prasad Mookerjee accused the interim government of threatening to bomb the people of Bihar, which, according to him was the greatest disservice to the Hindus. On 8 November 1946, the students of Patna University demonstrated against Nehru's visit to Bihar.

In his anxiety to restore peace and order in Bihar, Nehru spent a week there and returned on 9 November 1946. Later in his speech at the Subjects Committee meeting of the Meerut Congress, after handing over the Congress Presidentship to J.B. Kripalani, on 21 November 1946 Nehru referred to the Bihar incident and the criticism against him. He refuted the allegation that he threatened to use aerial bombing to quell the riots in Bihar. "These statements

<sup>13</sup>O.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma—Life of Mahatma Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 7 (Bombay: Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri and D.G. Tendulkar, 1953), p. 295.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid

<sup>15</sup>S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Second Series), vol. 1 (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Teen Murti House, 1984), p. 69.

are wrong. I never advocated bombing of the people";<sup>11</sup> said Nehru. He further clarified that what he actually stated was that the army would effectively deal with the situation if it took charge of it. Despite all the clarifications, Gandhi was not reconciled to the view that military help should be sought to put down riots. He had, however, no objection to the military being used for constructive purposes.

In November 1947 Acharya Kripalani tendered his resignation as president of the Congress in protest against the attitude of Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister who did not take him into confidence while initiating Governmental policies. Gandhi and Nehru did not agree on the successor to Kripalani. Gandhi wanted Acharya Narendra Deva as the President. Nehru, though supported him in the beginning, changed his mind, and in consultation with Patel, urged Rajendra Prasad to be the presidential candidate. Rajendra Prasad readily agreed and was elected much against the wishes of Gandhi. "Since Champaran, he had never once gone against his chief. Now he did."<sup>12</sup> Nehru and Patel thus ignored Gandhi's proposal to make Acharya Narendra Deva as the President.

#### ON THE FUTURE OF THE CONGRESS

In November 1947, Gandhi suggested that the political objective of the Congress, having been realised, the Congress should voluntarily dissolve itself. What he wanted was that the progressive and patriotic elements in the Congress should devote themselves to the task of nation-building. "... Hitherto the fight with the British engaged all the energy of our people. That energy must now be mobilised to make the nation prosperous and strong, or else it will recoil upon us and breed discord and disruption".<sup>13</sup> The Congress leaders however did not react favourably to the proposal. They were afraid of dissolving the congress because they thought that the hard won freedom would be jeopardised if the

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>12</sup>Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi A Study in Revolution*, op. cit., p. 372.

<sup>13</sup>Gandhi, quoted in Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, vol. 2 (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1958), p. 675.

organizational support of the Congress was lost on account of its dissolution.

Gandhi had foreseen that the Congress would eventually degenerate into a corrupt and timid organization and he felt worried over the "scramble for loaves and fishes in the Congress, and discord and personal rivalries among members of the Congress High Command".<sup>19</sup> After the meeting of the All India Congress Committee in November 1947, Gandhi repeatedly advised his colleagues for the dissolution, for that, according to him, was the only way to save the Congress before the rot set into its own detriment. But the wholly negative attitude of Nehru and others on this greatly disappointed him, and in a painful but helpless tone he said that "I can carry nobody with me in this".<sup>20</sup>

Earlier, when the Congress leaders were about to join the Interim Government, in 1946, Gandhi proposed that the 'front rank Congress leadership' should keep out of the Government and entrust the running of the government to the 'second line fighters'.<sup>21</sup> But his colleagues found it impossible to act upon his advice.

#### ON THE KASHMIR ISSUE

A passing reference may be made to another event although it arose soon after independence and as such it does not fall strictly within the period of this study. Gandhi regretted Nehru's decision to refer the Kashmir issue to the United Nations. He honestly believed that it would entangle the problem in unnecessary power politics. When he arrived in Delhi in September 1947, in the midst of communal clashes, he came to know of the infiltration of Pakistani tribesmen into Kasheur and Kashmir had not then joined either Dominion. The ruler of Kashmir sought protection from India when Pakistani troops entered Kashmir ostensibly to aid and abet the infiltrating tribesmen. Soon Indian army went into action following the announcement of Kashmir's accession to India on 29 October 1947. Though not very happy, Gandhi gave his approval to India's military action, but he did not like the idea of taking the issue to

<sup>19</sup>Gandhi, quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 675

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 231

the United Nations. He considered it as a purely bilateral issue to be solved by the parties themselves with the help of a British mediator.<sup>23</sup> Gandhi expressed himself in favour of Kashmir remaining a part of India. He thought that its Muslim majority would make it a symbol of India's secularism.<sup>24</sup>

Gandhi's last message to Nehru was that he and Patel must hold together for the good of the country. He knew well that in the situation as existed then in the country, both Nehru and Patel had to shoulder the burden of running the government. But unfortunately the two leaders were at loggerheads and in taste and temper they belonged to the opposites. Apparently worried over their strained relations, Gandhi thought it necessary to make an appeal to both. Accordingly he wrote a brief note to Nehru saying that he and Patel must bury their hatchet and hold on together for the good of the country. The same was conveyed to Patel at 4 P.M. on 30 January 1948 when he went to see Gandhi in Birla House.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, in their long political partnership both Nehru and Gandhi had to pass through many stresses and strains. Though their relationship was many sided and complex, it was also quite fruitful and exciting. Nehru always welcomed honest criticism and desired to have as much public discussion of the problems as possible. But he often felt that the dominant position of Gandhi, has, to some extent, prevented free and frank discussion.<sup>26</sup> He deprecated the general tendency of the Congressmen to blindly follow Gandhi by leaving everything to his decision. In his view, even greatmen must not be above criticism.

<sup>23</sup>Gandhi suggested the name of Philip Noel-Baker as mediator.

<sup>24</sup>Geoffrey Ashe, *Gandhi—A Study in Revolution*, op. cit., p. 377.

<sup>25</sup>Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 505.

<sup>26</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 406.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 676

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 251

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<sup>24</sup>Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 505.

<sup>25</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 406

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose

AMONG the galaxy of Indian patriots who fought for independence, Subhas Chandra Bose occupies a unique position. His dedication and sacrifice to the cause of the nation in a way, made him a hero of Indian nationalism. His indomitable spirit, his irrepressible passion for freedom and his impudent memorable campaigns, will always remain unforgettable. This "stormy petrel"<sup>1</sup> of Indian nationalism is often remembered not only for his supreme courage and fortitude, but also for his relentless fight against British imperialism.

Subhas Bose, like Nehru was one of the front rank leaders of the National Congress. Although both had an aristocratic family background and liberal Western education, Subhas Bose stood in sharp contrast to Nehru. Unlike Nehru who hailed from Kashmir, Subhas Bose was a product of revolutionary Bengal which was then a centre of turbulent nationalism. While Nehru was essentially a man of liberal outlook and ideas, Bose was a man of revolutionary spirit and reckless actions. The one was extremely cautious by nature, while the other was adventurous and overzealous in his youthful enthusiasm.

Both were staunch nationalists devoted wholly to the cause of independence and both rejected colonialism in all its manifestations. Though Nehru was nine years older, both belonged to the younger generation of the Congress leadership and had held radical views on the fundamental social and economic questions. Consistently they used to advocate a more vigorous and activist policy for the Congress since both believed that the nationalist struggle for political freedom should gradually become a social struggle for economic freedom. Both "rejected colonialism and professed a

<sup>1</sup>Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 236.

similarly vague socialism<sup>\*\*2</sup>, and their views on the basic questions like landlord versus peasants, capitalism versus labour often came into conflict with those of Gandhi who held a more pragmatic position. Besides Nehru and Bose, the leftwing Congress leadership also consisted of eminent members like Srinivas Iyengar, Dr. Mohammad Alam, K. F. Nariman Dr. S. Kitchlew and Jayaprakash Narain. However since 1930, Srinivasa Iyengar retired and with the exception of Subhas Bose and Dr. Kitchlew, all others were gradually won over by Gandhi.

### BOSE—A BORN REBEL

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897 in a well-to-do middle class family at Cuttack which was then a part of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> His student career started with the Protestant European School at Cuttack where he came into contact with the Western style of life and education. Though he had done well as a student, he was not very happy with the school life which, in many ways, was discriminatory against the Indian students. He was sorry to find that the Indian students were neither allowed to sit for the scholarship examinations nor were they permitted to join the Volunteer Corps. The racial prejudices of the authorities were quite apparent in their general treatment of the Indian students. These disturbing factors, Bose recalled in his autobiography, slowly "began to open our eyes to the fact that as Indians, we were a class apart though we belonged to the same institution."<sup>4</sup> This feeling of maladaptation in such an environment inevitably produced a strong desire to join an Indian school. Without any regret he withdrew from the school in 1909 and joined the Revaenshaw Collegiate School at Cuttack. The change in the environment naturally brought in him a new line of thinking and an altogether fresh spirit. "It was not a feeling of pride that crept into me, but

<sup>\*\*2</sup>Hugh Tinker, "Yesterday's Rebel, Today's Hero", in *South, The Third World Magazine* (London), no. 28, February 1983, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim—An Unfinished Autobiography and Collected Letters (1897-1921)*, Bombay Asia Publishing House, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Netaji's Life and Writings, Part I, *Indian Pilgrim or Autobiography of Subhas Bose (1897-1920)*, (Calcutta: Published for Netaji Publications Society by Thacker, Spink and Co., 1948), p. 29.

of self-confidence which till then had been lacking...,"<sup>5</sup> he wrote.

### SOCIAL SERVICE FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Though he was absorbed more and more in his studies, he often felt that he was not clear about his goal in life. Slowly then he began to evince keen interest in the speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda whose teachings brought about a spiritual transformation in him. He learned from Vivekananda that the greatest ideal was the service of humanity and "the Service of Humanity included, of course, the service of one's own country."<sup>6</sup> From Vivekananda, Subhas Bose gradually moved to a more fruitful study of Ramakrishna Paramahansa who stressed that renunciation of lust and gold was the real test of a man's fitness for spiritual life. A deep study of their ideals brought him into conflict with the prevailing social and family conventions and he was inclined to follow the dictates of his own conscience.

Subhas was convinced of the necessity of following a life conducive to his spiritual welfare and the service of humanity. He also realised that self-discipline was absolutely essential to the fulfilment of the mission of life. With such a firm commitment, he and his friends strove to "bring about a synthesis between religion and nationalism" and the stress "on nationalism was inevitable in the then political atmosphere of Calcutta."<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that an important precept of Swami Vivekananda was social service through national reconstruction and Subhas had already accepted it as his ideal.

In 1913 Subhas Bose joined the Presidency College at Calcutta and his college career, as in the school, was an eventful one. He was busy organizing debates and discussions, collecting funds for flood and famine relief and representing students before the authorities. But none of these activities could satiate his inner urges. So he left his studies and home on a religious errand and made his way

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 33

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 42

<sup>7</sup>S. A. Ayer, Netaji, I. N. A. and the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, in *Heralds of Freedom* (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division 1963), p. 17

"into the hearts of a jungle amidst the Valleys of Himalayas in search of some spiritual teacher."<sup>9</sup> Six months after his vain search for a spiritual guide, a disappointed Subhas returned home. Though he rejoined the college in 1915, his studies for the degree course were again interrupted because of the "Oaten incident" and he was rusticated for two years.<sup>10</sup> Later he joined the Scottish Church College of Calcutta and graduated with first class Honours in Philosophy in 1919.

### AN UNPRECEDENTED STEP

Soon after, his father offered to send him to England for the I. C. S. Examination. Although he was initially reluctant, he finally made up his mind to go. In July 1920, almost eight months after he had joined the Cambridge University he sat for the open competition in London and came out successfully securing the fourth position. He was now confronted with a major problem whether to join the prestigious service which assured a life of all comforts or to join nationalist movement which, although in pursuance of his cherished ideal of serving the motherland, promised nothing but a life of struggle, suffering and sacrifice. Reflecting on the problem, Subhas wrote to his brother Sarat Chandra Bose:

But for a man of my temperament who has been feeding on ideas which might be called eccentric—the line of least resistance is not the best line to follow. Life loses half its interest if there is no struggle—if there are no risks to be taken. . . . Moreover, it is not possible to serve one's country in the best and fullest manner if one is chained to the Civil Service. In short, national and spiritual aspirations are not compatible with obedience to Civil Service conditions<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup>Durlab Singh, *The Rebel President* (Lahore: Hero Publications, 1941), p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim—An Unfinished Autobiography and Collected Letters (1897-1921)*, op. cit., pp. 68-69. Subhas was accused of direct involvement in a strike organized by students in connection with the assault on an English Professor, Oaten, and he was rusticated for two years from the Presidency College, Calcutta.

<sup>11</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim or Autobiography of Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1920)*, op. cit., p. 126.

It took seven long months to resolve the problem and finally with a grim determination he decided to devote himself to the call of the motherland. In his letter of 16 February 1921, Subhas again wrote to his brother "If C. R. Das at his age can give up everything and face the uncertainties of life—I am sure, a youngman like myself who has no worldly cares to trouble him, is much more capable of doing so."<sup>11</sup> He was also inspired by the illustrious example of Aurobindo Ghosh to take such a decision. Thus, in May 1921, despite all objections of his parents and persuasions of his friends, Subhas Bose resigned from the Indian Civil Service. It was indeed an unprecedented step which no other Indian had taken until then.

#### ON THE NATIONAL SCENE

With the zeal of a missionary, he hurried back to India in July 1921 and took the big leap into the national struggle which was then in full swing. The Congress had adopted Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation in the Nagpur session held in December 1920. In his youthful enthusiasm, Subhas was eager to seek a clear conception of Gandhi's plan of action. But the very first meeting with Gandhi, in the afternoon of 16 July 1921, was a great disappointment. With all the clarifications offered by Gandhi, Subhas Bose, at the end felt "depressed and disappointed."<sup>12</sup> Later he left for Calcutta and there he had a meeting with C. R. Das. This meeting was quite pleasant and satisfying, and his own comment was "that I had found a leader and I meant to follow him."<sup>13</sup> He then decided to settle down in Calcutta under the advice of C. R. Das.

In the meantime the Congress had decided to organize a mass boycott campaign against the visit of the Prince of Wales and a call for hartal on 17 November 1921 was given. Subhas Bose who actively participated in the boycott campaign, was convicted for the first time for six months.<sup>14</sup> When he came out of prison, he

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 129

<sup>12</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-47)*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 55

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>Hans Hara Das, *Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Movement* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1983), P. 95

was faced with the problem of organizing flood relief and later in the annual session of the Congress held in Gaya in December 1922, under the presidentship of C.R. Das, he participated as a member of the AICC. Since then he started working in close cooperation with C.R. Das and under his inspiring leadership, Subhas Bose played an active role as organizer, editor and agitator in the Swaraj Party when it was formed in 1923.<sup>14</sup> In 1924 the Swarajists contested the elections of the Calcutta Corporation and secured a solid majority. Deshbandhu C.R. Das was elected its mayor and Subhas Bose was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer. The selfless service that he rendered in that capacity made him immensely popular in the whole province. But Deshbandhu's sudden death in 1925 came as a rude shock to him. It did not however deter him from pursuing the path of relentless struggle.

On 25 January 1925 the Government had ordered his deportation to Manday where he remained as a prisoner for nearly two and a half years. In November 1926, fresh elections to the Bengal Legislative Council were held, and as a Congress candidate, Subhas Bose, though in detention, was elected with a thumping majority. Soon after his release on 16 May 1927 on grounds of health, he resumed his vigorous political activities and he was elected President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

### ATTACK ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF PASSIVISM

In 1928, to the utter dismay of his friends and followers, Subhas Bose launched an attack on what he called the Sabarmati and Pondicherry Schools of thought represented by Gandhi and Aurobindo Ghosh respectively. The former came under fire for the creation of

a feeling and an impression that modernism is bad, that large scale production is an evil, that wants should not be increased, that the standard of living should not be raised, that we must endeavour to the best of our ability to go back to the days of the bullock-cart and that the soul is so im-

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, P. 102.

portant that the physical culture and military training can well be ignored.<sup>14</sup>

The latter was indicted for its stress on yoga and mysticism. The main target of his criticism was the actual positivism inculcated by the two Ashramic philosophies. Presenting himself as pragmatist, Subhas Bose declared that: "In India we want today a philosophy of activism."<sup>15</sup> Unlike Nehru, Bose challenged the passivism, constitutionalism and conciliation of Gandhi. He never accepted Gandhi's non-violence as a political creed although he was not averse to follow his programme of action.

#### Voice of Dissent

In appreciation of his long sufferings, Subhas Bose was appointed in 1927 as the General Secretary along with Sahib Qureshi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The year 1928 witnessed many turbulent activities, the All Parties Conference held at Lucknow adopted the Nehru Committee Report. As a protest against the attempt to dilute the Congress' objective to Dominion Status, the Independence League was formed. The Calcutta Congress of December 1928 witnessed the first trial of strength between the Right and Left wings and at this Congress Subhas Bose functioned as the General Officer Commanding Bengal Volunteer Corps which he had organized and trained on military lines. His agitational approach was clearly displayed in the historic Lahore Congress which, under the chairmanship of Nehru in 1929, adopted the resolution on independence. Subhas Bose was however excluded from the Working Committee reconstituted by the new president, Jawaharlal Nehru.<sup>16</sup>

During the years 1929-30, most of the Congress leaders were imprisoned in connection with the Civil Disobedience movement launched by Gandhi. His election as Mayor of Calcutta in 1930

<sup>14</sup>Speech at the third session of the All-India Youth Congress, Calcutta, 25 December 1928, in *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose* (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1962), p. 47.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Nripendra Nath Mitra, *The Indian Quarterly Register* (July-December 1919), vol. 2 (Calcutta: The Arneal Register Office), p. 311.

and his resignation of the presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee were the two important events of this Period. He was also elected President of the All India Trade Union Congress and he continued to hold that position till 1931. He was also unanimously elected President of the All India Naujawan Conference which was held on the occasion of the Karachi Congress, to protest against what was known as the Gandhian policy of appeasement. In 1932, while undergoing medical treatment in Europe, Subhas Bose established his personal contact with Vithalbhai Patel in Vienna.

His participation in the conference of the India Central European Society held in Vienna, his address to the Asiatic Students Conference in Rome opened by Signor Mussolini in 1935, his visit to Ireland, his arrival in Bombay and arrest on board the ship in 1936, and his departure for Europe in 1937 after an unconditional release were some of the landmarks in that period of his life.<sup>19</sup>

### A REBEL PRESIDENT

In January 1938, when he was still abroad, he was elected president of the 51st session of the Congress which was to be held at Haripura in Gujarat. This presidentship was a turning point both in his political career as well as in the history of India's freedom struggle. The Haripura Congress adopted a number of resolutions including the one on the war situation. In 1939, despite Gandhi's opposition, Subhas Bose contested the presidential election against the Gandhian Pattabhi Sitaramayya and won it. But it became impossible for him to carry on as president in the face of stiff opposition from Mahatma and his followers whose persistent non-cooperation finally forced him to resign. In May 1939, he formed the Forward Bloc within the Congress in order to make it a common platform for all the left elements inside the Congress. He then fought a number of losing battles with Gandhi and the right wing leaders. The Working Committee, in its meeting held on 9 August 1939 at Wardha, expressed its resentment over the protest meetings organized by Subhas Bose on 9 July

<sup>19</sup>S A. Ayer, Netaji, INA, and the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, in *Heralds of Freedom, op. cit.*, p. 31

against the 'resolutions'<sup>22</sup> of the AICC. The Committee, after rejecting his explanation, finally decided to disqualify Bose to be the president of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, and also to debar him from holding any position in an elective Congress Committee for three years. The resolution to that effect was drafted by Gandhi.<sup>23</sup>

### THRILLING ESCAPE

When the war broke out in September 1939 Subhas Bose thought that it was a golden opportunity to exploit the war situation for winning independence. He at once started an anti-war, anti-British campaign as the programme of the Forward Bloc all over the country. This brought him and his followers once again to prison life.<sup>24</sup> He had already been to jail eleven times and was in no mood to rot anymore in the prison especially at a crucial juncture. Desperate as he was, he announced his decision to go on a fast unto death. In December 1940, on the ninth day of his fast, he was released but kept under house arrest. But surprisingly on 27 January 1941, the country received the most sensational news that Subhas Bose escaped from his Calcutta home despite strict British surveillance.

The story of his escape to Germany is rather thrilling. In February Subhas Bose arrived in Kabul enroute to Moscow, but he failed to contact the Soviet embassy. The Italian embassy, however, arranged his onward journey to Berlin via Moscow.<sup>25</sup> Later, Indians came to know of his whereabouts only when he started his broadcasts from German radio in November 1941.

It is interesting to note that Gandhi received the news of

<sup>22</sup>The AICC in its meeting held on 24 June 1939 adopted two resolutions—one relating to satyagraha in the provinces, and the other defining the relation between the Congress ministries and the Provincial Congress Committees. These resolutions were opposed by Subhas Bose and the Socialists.

<sup>23</sup>D C Tendulkar, *Mahatma—Life of Mahatma Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 5 (Bombay, Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri and D G Tendulkar, 1952), p. 190.

<sup>24</sup>Maulana Abulkalam Azad, *India wins Freedom* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1959), p. 40.

<sup>25</sup>'Uttam Chand' When Bose Was Zamindar (Delhi: Rajkamal, 1946), pp. 14, 16, 49-50.

Subhas Bose's dramatic escape to Germany with a sympathetic feeling even though he had not approved many of his actions. This change in Gandhi's outlook was noticed by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who recalled "Many of his (Gandhi's) remarks convinced me that he had admired the courage and resourcefulness Subhas Bose had displayed in making his escape from India. His admiration for Subhas Bose unconsciously coloured his view about the whole war situation."<sup>24</sup> He also showed interest in listening to Bose's broadcasts.

#### AZAD HIND FAUJ

In Germany, though he did organize a vigorous propaganda, Subhas Bose was somewhat disillusioned by the cool response to his proposal for setting up of a free Indian Government in Berlin under his leadership as well as to sign a treaty defining its relationship with the Axis powers. His quest for foreign armed assistance to dislodge the British from India remained unfulfilled. He had to face severe hardship before he was able to accomplish the formation of the first 'Azad Hind Fauj' (Free India Army) on German soil.

Subhas Bose was in Europe for two years. While in Europe, he had interviews with Hitler and Mussolini. He had also established a Free India Centre and arranged for the publication of a monthly magazine 'Azad Hind' (Free India). Under his leadership an 'Indian Legion' of about a thousand men from among the war prisoners was organized. Thus the first "Free India Organization" was born in Germany in 1941 and Subhas Bose was widely acclaimed by its members as their "Netaji" (Leader).

In February 1945 Singapore fell to the Japanese forces who had taken about 20,000 Indian soldiers as prisoners of war. They were handed over to Captain Mohan Singh designated as General Officer Commanding and this was the genesis of the Indian National Army. In June 1942, Rash Behari Bose, the veteran revolutionary who had been in political exile in Japan for thirty long years invited Subhas Bose to East Asia in order to take up the leadership of Indian independence movement. Responding to this invitation, he arrived

<sup>24</sup>Maulana Abulkalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, op.cit., p. 41

in Tokyo in June 1943 after a risky voyage from Germany. His main objective was to set up a provisional government and to organize a liberation army, and he sought the Japanese help for it. In a radio broadcast from Tokyo on 19 June 1943, Subhas Bose said "Only an armed struggle can bring about the freedom of India. Non-violent satyagraha alone is not enough to overthrow British rule."<sup>25</sup> He was convinced of the necessity of organizing an armed revolt from outside just to supplement the ongoing struggle at home.

### PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF FREE INDIA

All his strenuous activities finally bore fruit when he inaugurated the Provisional Government of Free India in Singapore on 21 October 1943. He became the head of the State, Prime Minister, Minister of War, Foreign Minister and the Supreme Commander of the I.N.A. The first act of the Provisional Government was to declare war against Britain and the United States. Besides Japan, the provisional government was recognized by eight other countries—Germany, Italy, China, Manchukuo (now Manchuria), Burma, Thailand, Croatia, and Philippines.<sup>26</sup>

Soon after the formation of the Provisional Government, Subhas Bose attended the Greater East Asia Conference held in Tokyo where the Japanese Prime Minister announced the decision of his government to hand over the Andaman and Nicobar islands to the Provisional Government. He visited the islands on 31 December 1943 and the Provisional Government had decided to rename the islands as "Shaheed" (Martyrs) and "Swaraj" (Independence).<sup>27</sup>

### IN THE BATTLEFIELD

From Andamans Subhas Bose left for Rangoon where he

<sup>25</sup>Arun (ed.), *Testament of Subhas Bose (1942-43)*, (Delhi: Rajkamal Publications, 1946), p. 143.

<sup>26</sup>Mihir Sen, *The Lost Hero: A Biography of Subhas Bose* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), p. 216.

<sup>27</sup>S. A. Ayer, *Nehru, I N A and the Provisional Government*, in *Heralds of Freedom*, op. cit., p. 39.

established the headquarters of the Provisional Government, the Indian Independence League, and the I.N.A., in addition to the original centre of work in Singapore. This was followed by the historic announcement of I.N.A.'s swift fighting after crossing the Burma-India border for the first time. But it had not gone into action until February 1944. However in the following months, the I.N.A. fought a pitched battle "on eight sectors of the Burma-India border, on the plains of Imphal and in the neighbourhood of Kohima";<sup>21</sup> but failed to make any advance on account of many unfavourable factors. Adverse weather conditions, shortage of food supplies and war materials and above all the withdrawal of the air support by Japan largely contributed to the retreat. He also learnt that Russia had declared war on Japan and the surrender of Japan was officially announced on 15 August 1945. This created a perilous situation for I.N.A. Realising the mistake of his earlier political calculations, Subhas Bose now became increasingly convinced that the Soviet Union could possibly be a better ally in his fight against Britain and so he tried to establish contact with Russians in Manchuria. But he was not destined to lead the struggle any more.

In deference to the wishes of his trusted colleagues, Subhas Bose flew from Singapore to Bangkok on 16 August and then to Saigon next morning. On 18 August 1945, enroute to Tokyo, he died after his plane crashed in Formosa. Many in India refused to believe this news and rumours began to spread that he was still alive. To put an end to the speculations, the Nehru Government appointed a three members commission in 1956 to investigate the tragic end of Subhas Bose. The Commission categorically stated that he died of the serious injuries sustained in the plane crash.<sup>22</sup>

Subhas Bose was a staunch nationalist gifted with the rare ability for supreme self-sacrifice. His intolerant attitude towards the alien rule, coupled with an equally impatient mind forced him to leave the country, and his alliance with the Axis Powers was perhaps the final act of his life. He was thoroughly criticised both at home and abroad, for his concert with the fascist powers. Without realising the dangerous implications of the philosophy of

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>22</sup>The Commission's report was not unanimous; the dissenting vote was cast by Suresh Bose, brother of Subhas Chandra Bose.

Fascism, Subhas Bose forged an alliance with it which alienated him completely from Nehru and Gandhi.

### SUBHAS BOSE AND GANDHI

The role of Subhas Bose in the Indian political struggle was that of a rebellious leader. He was one of the most vocal critics of Gandhi ever since he came into contact with him. The very first meeting with Gandhi in 1921 produced nothing but a depressing effect on him. Recalling the first interview with Gandhi, Subhas Bose wrote, "My reason told me clearly, again and again that there was a deplorable lack of clarity in the plan which the Mahatma had formulated and that he did not have a clear idea of the successive stages of the campaign which would bring India to her cherished goal of freedom."<sup>30</sup>

Despite the fact that the two had the same objective of liberating the country from the yoke of British imperialism, they considerably differed on the means to realise it. These differences characterised their political relationship from the beginning until his last meeting with Gandhi at Wardha in June 1940. While he realised that Gandhi was the undisputed leader of the Congress, he did not appreciate his dictatorial role within the organization. "The Working Committee since 1929" observed Subhas Bose, "has been elected according to his dictation, and no one can find a place on that committee who is not thoroughly submissive to him and his policy."<sup>31</sup>

### CONFLICTING VIEWS

Clashes between Gandhi and Subhas Bose were inevitable because of their diametrically opposite ideas and outlook on many national and international questions. While Bose wanted to pursue the path of uncompromising militancy, Gandhi insisted on following the path of peaceful agitation and possible compromises. He was never satisfied with the methods of action initiated by Gandhi.

<sup>30</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., pp. 34-55.  
<sup>31</sup>IBID., p. 22.

from time to time. Subhas Bose persistently demanded more effective methods of struggle than what Gandhi was inclined to adopt. Also in his view, the nonviolent struggle of Gandbi had essentially an element of compromise in itself which Bose never appreciated, for his was the concept of an uncompromising struggle against British imperialism.

As the movement started gaining momentum Subhas Bose felt more and more disenchanted with Gandhi whose passive attitude and lack of dynamism became somewhat irksome. He felt greatly disturbed when Gandhi called off the non-cooperation movement just because of a stray incident of violence. "To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling point", commented Subhas Bose, "was nothing short of a national calamity."<sup>32</sup>

Although Gandhi's leadership of the Congress was known for certain tangible achievements, Subhas Bose always felt that the movement had certain shortcomings. He could not appreciate the leader arrogating to himself all powers and responsibilities. During the lifetime of leaders like C.R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai and Motilal Nehru, there was some kind of an effective check on Gandhi. But after their death, "the entire intellect of the Congress has been mortgaged to one man and those who dare to think freely and speak out openly are regarded by the Mahatma and his disciples as heretics and treated as such."<sup>33</sup> He also felt that Gandhi's promise of swaraj in one year was unwise and meaningless. The mixing up of the Khilafat question with the national problems and the formation of independent Khilafat Committees throughout the country were regarded as most unwarranted.

While Subhas Bose had high admiration for C.R. Das and found in him all outstanding qualities of an astute politician, he had nothing but criticism of all the Gandhian techniques. Gandhi, according to him, essentially lacked the instinct of a correct judgement so necessary in political battles. Gandhi was no match for C.R. Das and Bose regarded the birth of the 'Swaraj Party' as the consequence of a rationalist revolt against Gandhism. He was shocked to find a section of the Congressmen treating Gandhi as "a religious preceptor" preaching "the cult of a new messiah."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup>*ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup>*ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>34</sup>*ibid.*, p. 114.

What he objected to was the Gandhian way of muddling up politics, religion and ethics instead of considering political issues independently on a rational basis.

### ILLTIMED CAMPAIGN OF 1930

Subhas Bose believed that the turbulent political conditions created by the revolutionary activities, labour unrest and youth movements of 1928-1929, provided a golden opportunity for a serious political campaign. He pleaded with Gandhi to come out of retirement and launch a vigorous political struggle. But Gandhi refused to heed as "he did not see any light, though before his very eyes the peasantry of Bardoli were demonstrating through a no tax campaign",<sup>25</sup> and were ready for struggle. In 1930 when the mass upheaval began to recede and the labour unrest almost subsided, Gandhi launched his civil disobedience movement. Thus was illtimed and Subhas Bose felt that the responsibility for not utilising the situation in 1928-29 lay entirely with Gandhi.

From the beginning Subhas Bose had taken a firm position on the question of complete independence for India. In his presidential address at the Maharashtra provincial conference, held in Poona on 3 May 1928, he made his position clear: "Speaking for myself, I stand for an independent Federal Republic.... India must fulfil her own destiny and cannot be content with colonial self-government or Dominion Home Rule..."<sup>26</sup> Such an adamant attitude inevitably brought him into conflict with the majority view that favoured Dominion Status. Bose was vehemently opposed to Gandhi's compromise resolution, moved in the Calcutta Session of the Congress, giving an ultimatum of twelve months to the British Government to concede the demand of Dominion Status. Since there was no reasonable chance of getting it within that period he pleaded with Gandhi to accept his "resolution and inspire the younger generation with a new consciousness."<sup>27</sup> The resolution finally adopted there was, in his view, a retreat from the earlier position taken at Madras in December 1927.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 143

<sup>26</sup>Subhas Bose, "Vision of a Free India", in *Selected Speeches of Subhas Bose* (ed. cit.), p. 34

<sup>27</sup>Subhas Bose, "Against Dominion Status", in *ibid.*, p. 43.

### ON THE BOYCOTT OF LEGISLATURES

The year 1929 witnessed another controversy between Subhas Bose and Gandhi when a resolution at the instance of the latter was adopted by the Working Committee, calling upon all Congressmen to resign their seats in the legislatures. Bose was then a member of the Working Committee and was stoutly opposed to it even though Gandhi was adamant on the boycott. He regarded it "tactically a great blunder when the new constitution was under consideration."<sup>22</sup> However with the full support of Motilal Nehru, Gandhi was able to get it through. It may be noted that Subhas Bose's rigid attitude towards Gandhi and his open criticism led to a split in the Bengal Congress Committee which eventually divided the youth and the students.

Bose and Gaodhi again clashed in the Lahore Congress held in 1929. His resolution calling upon the Congress to set up a parallel government and to organize workers, peasants and youth was defeated. Also his open indictment of the Congress leadership for its failure to lay down any meaningful programme of political action even after accepting the goal of complete independence, was greatly resented. Subhas Bose had to pay dearly for this when the new Working Committee was constituted. Gandhi insisted on approving the list of fifteen which excluded the names of Subhas Bose and Srinivasa Iyengar. Though the exclusion of the two names was not to the liking of many, Gandhi was adamant on it and when it became a question of confidence in him, the house had no option but to accept the list. Commenting on this, Subhas Bose observed:

With a subservient cabinet, it was possible for him to conclude the pact with Lord Irwin in March 1931, to have himself appointed as the sole representative to the Round Table Conference, to conclude the Poona Agreement in September 1932 and do other acts which have done considerable dis-service to the public cause.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., p. 169  
<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 175.

## UNINSPIRING LEADERSHIP

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact came in for a sharp criticism from Bose. The agreement was an illconceived one and it was a mistake to suspend the movement. The leadership, he felt, should have waited for six months or even one year for a more suitable opportunity. The Pact, in his view, was a "painful document", "an advantage to the government and a disaster to the people."<sup>44</sup>

The Congress met at Karachi in 1931 under the shadow of a great tragedy arising out of the execution of Bhagat Singh and two of his comrades. Subhas Bose severely criticised Gandhi for his failure to save their life. He was also critical of the election of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as the president of the Congress as it was done not by the delegates but by the Working Committee and he considered it illegal.<sup>45</sup> He also felt that the election of Patel, a strong supporter of Gandhi, was a well thought out plan to get ratification of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Bose's criticism had the general approval of the All India Nanjawan Bharat Sabha which was in session on 27 March 1931 to protest against the policy of Gandhi and passed a resolution condemning the Delhi Pact.<sup>46</sup> However despite all protests and resentment, the Karachi Congress was a victory for Gandhi who was elected as the sole representative of the Congress to the Second Round Table Conference.

Subhas Bose was not happy about this and he called it a great blunder. He even publicly stated that "India's salvation will not be achieved under his leadership."<sup>47</sup> The failure of Gandhi at the Round Table Conference provoked him further and he attributed a number of lapse to Gandhi for it. First Gandhi's trip to London was badly planned and no competent adviser was included in his personal entourage. Secondly, there was a complete lack of "co-

<sup>44</sup>In his Presidential speech at the Third Indian Political Conference held in London on 10 June 1931—Bose said, "I shall ever go as far as to say that in the circumstances which prevailed in March 1931—better term could have been extracted from the government if our leaders had possessed greater statesmanship and diplomacy." *Ibid.*, pp. 362-63.

<sup>45</sup>Sabu K. Bose (ed.), *Netaji—Collected Works*, vol. 2, (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 1981), p. 224.

<sup>46</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, "After the Gandhi-Irwin Pact", in *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>47</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., p. 295.

ordination and unity of purpose in all his activities."<sup>44</sup> More than that during his stay there, Gandhi played a dual role of being a political leader and a world teacher at the same time. "Sometimes he conducted himself not as a political leader who had come to negotiate with the enemy but as a master who had come to preach a new faith—that of non-violence and world peace."<sup>45</sup> What irritated him most was Gandhi's complete failure to expose the imperialist conspiracy to belittle and ignore the importance of the Congress. His repeated offer of cooperation to the Government further made his position deplorably vulnerable.

Gandhi's decision to suspend the civil disobedience movement in May 1933 created a piquant situation. Subhas Bose and Vithalbhai Patel who were then in Vienna for medical treatment, issued in May 1933 a joint manifesto,<sup>46</sup> criticising Gandhi's action. They blamed Gandhi for the untimely suspension of the struggle which, in effect, had nullified all that was achieved earlier. It may be noted that this criticism was just ignored by many in the Congress circles.

#### BOSE REGARDED GANDHI AS A REFORMIST AND NOT A REVOLUTIONARY

In his political assessment which subsequently proved to be erroneous and unrealistic, Subhas Bose predicted in 1934, that the Congress had no future role to play. Its heterogeneous character without any clear ideology or programme would make its survival extremely difficult. Bose was equally pessimistic about the future of Gandhism for, according to him it did not have any clear programme of social reconstruction. He often dismissed it as irrelevant, the talk among the Congressmen that Gandhism provided the only

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

"In the manifesto, it was stated that "It is futile to expect that we can ever bring about a change of heart in our rulers merely through our own suffering or by trying to love them. And the latest action of Mahatma Gandhi in suspending the civil disobedience movement is a confession of failure as far as the present method of the Congress is concerned. We are clearly of opinion that as a political leader Mahatma Gandhi has failed." For the text of the manifesto see Hari Hara Das, *Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Movement*, op. cit., p. 348.

solution to India's economic and social problems. Gandhi, in his view was "fundamentally a reformist and not a revolutionary"<sup>17</sup> and had no genuine interest in the reorganization of the existing social and economic order. His interest was mainly to fight those glaring injustices against which his moral sense revolted. The "Eleven Points"<sup>18</sup>, which he enunciated in 1930, as "substance of independence" would only strengthen a traditionally capitalist economic system. Gandhi disliked the "machine civilization" of the modern age and had no desire for the industrialization of the society. Another great deficiency of Gandhism, according to Subhas Bose, was that he did not bother much about the international developments, nor did he show any keen interest in taking advantage of the international crisis for India's liberation.<sup>19</sup>

Subhas Bose's critique of Gandhism was based more on emotionalism than on a clear grasp of its multidimensional character. Gandhism stood with a clear vision of a future Indian society in which the economic resurrection of village India would obviate the need for revolution. That did not mean that Gandhi had no definite plan of social reconstruction. The difficulty with Subhas Bose was that, in his anxiety to provide a radical content to his programme of social and political action, he completely lost sight of the Gandhian perspective. Hence the ultra-radicalism of Subhas Bose remained throughout incompatible with the revolutionary spirit of Gandhi.

#### HANIPURA: A TURNING POINT

The Hanipura Congress held in February 1938 marked the beginning of a new crisis in the already embittered relation between

<sup>17</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., p. 316 .

<sup>18</sup> Gandhi announced his eleven point demand on 30 January 1930. These were—"abolition of liquor trade, revaluation of the rupee, reduction in the expenditure of the army and in the salaries of the bureaucrats, fifty per cent reduction in the land revenue, imposition of protective tariff against foreign cloth, abolition of salt tax, reservation of coastal traffic for Indian shipping, abolition of the C.I.D., release of political prisoners, and conferring on Indians the right to carry fire arms." J.B. Kripalani, *Gandhi: His Life and Thought* (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1970), pp. 178-79 . . . .

<sup>19</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., p. 316 . . . .

Bose and Gandhi. Bose was determined to do everything possible to stiffen the opposition of the Congress to any compromise with Britain on the major issues of Federation and the coming war. Despite Subhas Bose's open criticism, Gandhi was not hostile to him until September 1938. As a matter of fact, Gandhi did not object to the inclusion of the socialists in the Working Committee in 1936, 1937 and 1938. In February 1938 Subhas Bose had the approval of Gandhi to nominate them on the Working Committee.<sup>50</sup> However a perceptible change in the attitude of Gandhi occurred in September 1938 when the agitated leftwing members walked out of a meeting of AICC at Delhi:

Another move which Gandhi resented was the open campaign which Subhas Bose launched to prepare for a militant national struggle which was to synchronise with the possible outbreak of a war in Europe. Gandhi also did not like the creation of a National Planning Committee in 1938 which was entirely the product of Subhas Bose's ideas of national development through industrialisation.<sup>51</sup>

The result of the widening rift between the two was that Gandhi opposed Subhas Bose's re-election, in 1939, as President for a second term. But the re-election of Subhas Bose against Gandhi's Pattabhi Sitaramayya led to an unprecedented crisis. Subhas Bose had to finally resign in the face of stiff opposition from Gandhi and his supporters. The two had already fallen apart on the question of resumption of a national struggle as well as on the issue of a correct war policy. In his reply to Subhas Bose's letter of 6 April 1939, Gandhi openly acknowledged that they had sharp differences in their approach and so it was not possible for them to meet on the political platform. "Let us agree to differ there, and let us meet on the social, moral and municipal platforms. I cannot add economic, for we have discovered our differences on that platform also."<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Socialists were inducted into the office in 1936 and 1937 by Nehru and in 1938 by Subhas Bose. J B Kripalani, *Gandhi His Life and Thought*, op. cit., pp. 176-177.

<sup>51</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., p. 331.

<sup>52</sup>Gandhi's letter to Subhas Bose, 10 April 1939, in Sisir K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads. The Work of Subhas Bose (1938-40)*. (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 1981), pp. 176-77. In his long letter of 6 April 1939, Bose sought certain clarifications from Gandhi and wanted to know whether the latter approved Panj's resolution in its original form or its amended form. For full text of the letter see *Ibid.*, pp. 169-76.

Further Gandhi's adamant attitude not to cooperate with the new president to form a composite Working Committee, was the last straw that broke the camel's back.

### THE LAST MEETING

Subhas Bose and Gandhi clashed again when the war broke out in September 1939. The latter, after a meeting with the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, on 6 September 1939, issued a statement which was indeed a bombshell to many. He wanted India to cooperate with Britain in her hour of crisis. Subhas Bose, on the other hand, wanted to exploit the situation created by the war for an all-out fight against Britain. Reacting sharply against Gandhi's view, he launched a countrywide propaganda that India could hope to be free only out of Britain's defeat in the war. It had its effect on the Congress which subsequently altered its earlier war policy. In the tense situation Subhas Bose was getting impatient. The civil disobedience movement started by his Forward Bloc was already in full swing. He met Gandhi in June 1940, and pleaded with him, to seize the occasion and start an all-out campaign of passive resistance. But Gandhi's response was rather cool. In his view, the country was not ready for a fight. Subhas Bose was told at the end of this last meeting that "if his efforts to win freedom for India succeeded then his (Gandhi's) telegram of congratulation would be the first."<sup>13</sup> that Bose would receive.

Later in August 1942 when the Congress adopted the 'Quit India' resolution, Subhas had left the country. His reactions were not at all favourable despite Gandhi's interpretation of the Resolution as 'open rebellion'. What he advocated then was not only an armed struggle but also the need for a new leadership in place of Gandhi. In August 1942 he wrote, "But it is necessary for the Indian people to take up arms in their struggle and to cooperate with those powers that are fighting Britain today. This task, Gandhi will not accomplish—hence India now needs new leadership."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-47)*, *ed. cit.*, p. 341

<sup>14</sup>Subhas Bose, "Free India and Her Problem" (Article published in the German Periodical *Welt und Mensch*, in August 1942 and reprinted in *Azad Hind*, the official publication of Free India Centre in Berlin), in *Indian Struggle (1920-47)*, *ed. cit.*, p. 452.

## ON THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE CONGRESS

Bose and Gandhi had conflicting views on the future role of the Indian National Congress. Bose quite emphatically argued that "the party that wins freedom for India should be also the party that will put into effect the entire programme of post-war reconstruction."<sup>55</sup> He had no doubt that the party would have to assume power and carry on the administration. As a responsible organization it should undertake the work of national reconstruction and fulfil its historic role. Failure to do so by the liquidation of the Congress would only pave the way to chaos and confusion.

Contrary to this, Gandhi advocated in 1948, just before his death, that the Congress should not continue as a political party. He wanted to keep it out of competition for power and convert it into a "Lok Sevak Sangh", a non-political body devoted to constructive work and social service.<sup>56</sup> Congress, in his view, was a great ongoing movement that did not stop with the attainment of freedom. As the social and economic problems remained unsolved, the movement shall have to continue. He advised those Congressmen who wanted to hold the office of power to leave the Congress and form their own political parties.

Despite this fundamental difference in politics Bose and Gandhi had tremendous respect and regards for each other. Though Gandhi rejected all that Bose preached and practised, he never restrained from "giving unstinted praise to his patriotism, resourcefulness and bravery."<sup>57</sup> Had he not come into clash with Gandhi, his political future would have been altogether different. The radicalism and militancy of Subhas Bose was largely the result of his conviction that a country could win its independence only through an armed struggle. This was perhaps the fundamental point on which he fell out with Gandhi and Nehru who firmly denounced the use of force and violence in politics.

<sup>55</sup>The Haripura Address in Saur K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads. The Work of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-48)*, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>56</sup>Gandhi, "The Last Will and Testament", in Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, vol. 2, (Ahmedabad. Navajivan Publishing House, 1958), pp. 819-20.

<sup>57</sup>D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma. Life of Mahatma Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 8 (Bombay: Vishalbhai K. Jhaveri and D.G. Tendulkar, 1963), p. 178.

## JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

## SPOKESMEN OF RADICALISM

From the beginning, Subhas Bose looked upon Nehru as the only leader who could give a new orientation and proper direction to the Congress movement. In one of his earlier letters to Nehru, Subhas Bose openly acknowledged that "Among the front rank leaders of today—you are the only one to whom we can look up for leading the Congress in a progressive direction."<sup>14</sup> As the spokesmen of radicalism within the Congress they had endeared themselves to many and worked in the early phase of their career like comrades in arms. Inspired and goaded by the ideals of social advancement, Nehru and Bose kept up the tempo for the qualitative transformation in the nature of the Indian independence movement. At the same time they became extremely popular and began to gain ascendancy as the two rising revolutionary leaders of the Congress youth movement.<sup>15</sup>

Though they worked in concert for sometime, with an identity of views on social and economic questions, they had apparently chosen divergent methods of political action in the pursuit of their goal. Nehru was comparatively the most popular figure among the left-wing leaders of the Congress. But his loyalty to Gandhi often neutralised his radicalism and according to Subhas Bose, "it would probably be correct to say that while his brain is with the left wingers, his heart is with Mahatma Gandhi."<sup>16</sup> However Nehru's bold initiative in the context of wavering and indecisive approach of the top Congress leadership, won the appreciation of Subhas Bose who gave him his whole-hearted support on certain crucial occasions. This, in a way helped both of them to make a lasting

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1958), p. 165.

<sup>15</sup>It should be noted that Subhas Chandra Bose frequently used the term 'Left Wing' in his work "The Indian Struggle" in a vague and ambiguous manner. His conception of Left wing politics did not have much ideological meaning although he did raise the question of capital and labour, landlord and peasants and also the social evil of the prevailing caste system. But his differences with Nehru and others ultimately gave the impression that "criticism of Gandhi and rejection of Gandhism came to be the hallmark of his Leftism". (Madhu Limaye, "Netaji—A Reappraisal", *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (Bombay), 16-21 January 1964, p. 15).

<sup>16</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., p. 29.

impact among the nationalists and helped in building up their own image and stature.

Bose and Nehru had conflicting views on the question of 'Council entry' advocated by the Swarajists. While the former broadly supported the Swarajists, the latter disagreed with them and "since they came to power, he had voluntarily occupied a back seat in the councils of the Congress."<sup>41</sup> Throughout the controversy raised by the Swaraj Party, Nehru was more in agreement with Gandhi than with his father Motilal Nehru, who along with C.R. Das was advocating the return to parliamentary politics. Despite their disagreement on this, Subhas Bose gave his full support to Nehru's resolution on complete independence, at the Madras session of the Congress in 1927, which in a way marked the beginning of a new orientation in the Congress policy. The Congress also took another bold step by appointing these two young leaders as General Secretaries for the coming year.

### CAMPAIGN FOR COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE

While the two young nationalists welcomed the settlement of the communal question made by the Nehru Committee, they voiced their protest against its recommendation on a Dominion form of government. Coming as it did after the Madras Congress resolution on complete independence, they genuinely thought of it as a retrograde step. They, therefore, decided to oppose its adoption at the All Parties Conference at Lucknow, and a private meeting of the members of the left wing was held at Lucknow to chalk out a programme of action.<sup>42</sup> Nehru and Bose clarified their position that, while they would oppose the recommendation of Dominion Status, they would refrain from doing anything that might weaken the organization.<sup>43</sup> They also decided to form an "Independence for India League" to carry on effective campaign in favour of

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>43</sup>A statement to that effect "was read out at the conference" and it was made clear "that constitution of India should only be based on Complete Independence..." See Patalabhau Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1935)*, vol. I (Congress Working Committee Publication, 1935), p. 551.

complete independence. Thus Nehru and Bose had almost identical views on the question of independence and after the conference they vigorously campaigned for it. They had also decided to step down from their position as General Secretaries as they were the founders of the 'League'. But they were told that they could carry on with the League as it did not conflict with the Congress policy since the Madras session of the Congress.<sup>44</sup>

In the Calcutta Congress in 1928, Subhas Bose did move an amendment<sup>45</sup> to the main resolution of Gandhi generally approving the recommendations of the Nehru Committee. His aim was not to accept even by implication, Dominion Status for India as contemplated in the constitution drawn up by the All Parties Conference. Extending his full support to the amendment, Nehru spoke, "We cannot accept it as our ideal or aim. Having accepted independence as our goal a year earlier, if we now accept this report as our ideal—you can well imagine where we are going..."<sup>46</sup> Although the amendment was lost, their campaign for 'Poorna Swaraj' continued and bore fruit when a resolution to that effect was adopted in the Lahore Congress presided over by Nehru in 1929.

It is interesting to recall here that Subhas Bose wanted "to move an amendment to the Independence Resolution at Lahore to the effect that independence should be defined in terms of political and economic freedom of the masses" so as to enthrone them to make the requisite sacrifices in the freedom struggle: "but the amendment was put aside."<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, this showed that

<sup>44</sup>"Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography (London: The Bodley Head, 1955), p. 173.

<sup>45</sup>"After a good deal of discussion in the Subjects Committee meeting a compromise was arrived at between Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru on the one hand, and others on the other side. This compromise was however not respected in the open session where an amendment was moved by Bose and seconded by Jawaharlal Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1935)*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 561.

<sup>46</sup>Nehru, "On Subhas Bose's Amendment of Mahatma Gandhi's Resolution", Report of the Proceedings of the Indian National Congress, Calcutta, 1928, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), pp. 216-77.

<sup>47</sup>H. V. Kamath, "The Forward Movement within Indian National Congress" in Sri Ram Sharma (ed.) *Netaji: His Life and Works* (Agra: Shiva Lal Aggarwal and Co., 1942), p. 96.

Subhas Bose was, in a way, ahead of Nehru in their combined programme of radicalisation of the Congress. It was mainly due to their effort that the youth movement particularly received a tremendous impetus and Naujawan Sabhas and student organisations were formed all over the country.<sup>68</sup>

### THE POLITICAL RAPPROCHEMENT

As the principal spokesmen of the left-wing Congress, Bose and Nehru used to assert themselves in almost all sessions since 1927. Gandhi was closely watching the development more particularly the steady growing mass popularity of Nehru. The tactical move of Gandhi to stem the tide of left-wing opposition was to win over Nehru to his side. As a first step in this direction Gandhi's choice fell on Nehru for the presidency of the Lahore Congress despite the clear general feeling in the Congress that the honour should go to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. For Gandhi, the choice was indeed a prudent one. "But for the Congress Left-wing", wrote Subhas Bose, "it proved to be unfortunate, because that event marked the beginning of a political rapprochement between the Mahatma and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and a consequent alienation between the latter and the Congress Leftwing."<sup>69</sup>

Nehru's acceptance of the presidency of the Lahore Congress was not well received in the Leftwing circle particularly by Subhas Bose. They felt that, as an outstanding leader of the Left, Nehru should have accepted the presidency only when he was confident of pushing his programme through the organization. The Congress then was completely dominated by Gandhi that a president could hardly function independently.<sup>70</sup> However, for Nehru, it was a turning point in his public career, and since his election as president, Nehru was "a consistent and unfailing supporter of the Mahatma."<sup>71</sup> His alliance with Gandhi on crucial occasions even at the risk of coming into conflict with the leftists like Subhas Bose was not very uncommon.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>69</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., p. 169.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 169-70.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid*, p. 170

## NEHRU'S 'POLITICS OF VACILLATION'

While Bose stood firm in his political convictions, Nehru used to vacillate, often compromising with his known stand on many issues. A typical instance was provided by his wavering approach to the Delhi Manifesto, issued by a galaxy of Indian leaders in November 1929, thanking the Viceroy for his sincerity and assuring of all cooperation to the British Government in its efforts to evolve a dominion constitution for India. Bose not only refused to sign the declaration, but issued a counter manifesto after resigning from the Congress Working Committee.<sup>12</sup> But the attitude of Nehru was quite different. Although he was, in the beginning, inclined to issue the counter manifesto jointly with Bose, he changed his mind under the influence of Gandhi. He readily accepted the arguments of Gandhi that the manifesto would lose much of its importance unless it was signed by Nehru, since he was the president-elect of the Lahore Congress.<sup>13</sup> Bose commented on this shift in Nehru's attitude as a "sickening familiar pattern."<sup>14</sup>

That Nehru and Bose had different political perspective was obvious in the Lahore Congress. While Bose argued in favour of a parallel government and wanted to mobilize the peoples' support for complete independence, Nehru's focus was mainly on 'world movements' and 'world cooperation'. While the former had his mental reservation about the Gandhian techniques of nonviolent struggle, the latter had accepted it as a pressing necessity. There was qualitative difference even in their concept of radicalism.

Nehru's political perspective always had the tinge of an ideological mooring and an awareness of the political and social reality. His approach was, therefore, a cautious one devoid of adventurism. Bose, on the contrary, had no ideological inhibitions in his search

<sup>12</sup>Mihir Bose, *The Lost Hero: A Biography of Subhas Bose*, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>13</sup>As Tara Chand observes: "To Jawaharlal Nehru, the President-elect of the Congress of 1929 it was a bitter pill to swallow. It caused him great distress to give up the demand for independence, but for the sake of avoiding a split he allowed himself to be coaxed to sign." Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, vol. 4 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1972), p. 89.

<sup>14</sup>Mihir Bose, *The Lost Hero: A Biography of Subhas Bose*, op. cit., p. 72.

for collaborators to overthrow imperialism.<sup>75</sup> He was wholly guided by the considerations of fighting the enemy in a most militant manner. While Nehru's appeal to the young radicals necessarily implied the considerations of not alienating their more conservative elders, Subhas Bose's radicalism only helped the process of distrust and alienation.

### ON GANDHI-IRWIN PACT

Subhas was critical of Nehru for the latter's acceptance of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. He somehow came to believe that Gandhi was under pressure from the wealthy aristocrats and conservative politicians who were out for a quick settlement. According to Bose the Working Committee then did not have any outstanding leader except Nehru, who, unfortunately did not rise to the occasion. On 4 March 1931, the negotiations between Gandhi and the Viceroy came to an end, and Gandhi then put before the Working Committee the terms of the Pact and sought its unanimous approval. "At this juncture", observed Bose, "the responsibility of Jawaharlal Nehru was very great", and "his refusal would have been sufficient to prevent the final acceptance of the Pact by the Mahatma and the Working Committee."<sup>76</sup>

After the publication of the Pact, Nehru clarified his position that he stood by the leader in the true spirit of an obedient soldier even though he had his own reservations about some of the terms of the Pact.<sup>77</sup> This however did not satisfy Bose whose comment was that "the country had regarded him as something more than an obedient soldier."<sup>78</sup> His disappointment with Nehru was not confined to this alone. He deplored Nehru's indecisive attitude, his reluctance to face unpopularity and the lack of leadership qualities. Bose believed that despite his vast knowledge of the modern world and his ability to think in terms of fresh ideas,

<sup>75</sup>B. Shiva Rao, *India's Freedom Movement Some Notable Figures* (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1979), p. 151.

<sup>76</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-47)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-01.

<sup>77</sup>Commenting on the terms of the settlement, Nehru wrote "at the very top, clause 2 with its reference to safeguards, etc., gave me a tremendous shock. I was wholly unprepared for it." Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* *op. cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>78</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-47)*, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

Nehru failed to rescue the Congress from the stranglehold of the 'Old Guard'.

### ON FASCISM AND COMMUNISM

Nehru and Bose had almost diametrically opposite views on Fascism. While the former disliked Fascism intensely and did not consider it "anything more than a crude and brutal effort of the present capitalist order to preserve itself at any cost,"<sup>12</sup> the latter did not subscribe to it. Given the choice, Nehru preferred communism to fascism because he believed that "the basic ideology of communism and its scientific interpretation of history is sound."<sup>13</sup> That he was intensely anti fascist in his outlook was quite apparent when he suggested after the failure of the Cripps mission that India should fight with Britain against Fascism.<sup>14</sup> Though the suggestion evoked no interest in Gandhi and others, it clearly demonstrated his determination to fight against the fascist menace. Nehru was one of the very few persons who had consistently raised their voice, for years, against Fascism and Nazism. Addressing the students of Bengal at the Albert Hall in Calcutta, on 18 January 1934, Nehru said: "Personally I have the extremist dislike for fascism. I think it is a most undesirable thing and I should like to combat it if it came to India."<sup>15</sup> In a statement made at his trial in Gorakhpur prison in November 1940, Nehru said, "My whole nature rebelled against them, and on many an occasion I vehemently criticised the pro-Fascist and appeasement policy of the British Government."<sup>16</sup> He regarded Fascism not only as a close ally but also a more dangerous form of imperialism. Nehru said:

We looked upon the two as twin brothers which crushed freedom and prevented peace and progress. We realised that

<sup>12</sup>Nehru's press statement on 18 December 1933, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6 (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1974), p. 134.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., p. 349.

<sup>15</sup>S. Gopal (ed.) *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>16</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India - Collected Writings (1937-40)*, (London, Lindsay Drummond, 1948), p. 397.

the conflict between fascism and imperialism on the one side, and freedom and democracy on the other, was world wide, and gradually we ranged ourselves with the forces of progress and freedom."<sup>64</sup>

The statement revealed an amazing spirit of enquiry on the part of Nehru, whose thorough grasp of the political and ideological forces that governed the European world was characteristic of his personality.

The political world of Subhas Bose did not have much of an ideological orientation. The spirit of an enquiry into the forces that influence the emerging world also did not make much of an appeal to him. All his programme of political action was directed with the sole purpose of fighting the British imperialism and the total elimination of the alien rule from India "was an objective of such vital importance that the means adopted receded into the background as a matter of relatively little interest."<sup>65</sup> Unlike Nehru, he showed no awareness of the dangerous consequences of the growth of Fascism and Nazism. He was not much impressed by the considerations of the cruel suppression of human freedom under Fascism and Nazism.

Subhas Bose was an admirer of Mussolini and was impressed by the progress in Italy during his leadership. He was also full of appreciation for the achievements of the National Social Democratic Party in Germany. During his visit to Europe just before the outbreak of the Second World War, he made a futile attempt "to secure Hitler's support for India's freedom movement."<sup>66</sup> His cup of happiness was full to the brim when Gandhi, on his way back from London, paid a visit to Italy in December 1931. While this meeting was severely criticised in anti-Fascist circles, Bose came out with all praise for it. "The Mahatma", said Subhas Bose, "rendered great public service by his visit to Italy. The only regret is that he did not stay there longer and did not cultivate more personal contacts."<sup>67</sup> In 1933 Bose was invited to attend a Students'

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 294-95.

<sup>65</sup>B. Shiva Rao, *India's Freedom Movement—Some Notable Figures*, op. cit., p. 149

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>67</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-47)*, op. cit., p. 231

Conference in Italy, and to address the Oriental Institute which Mussolini was to inaugurate. He held long discussions with Mussolini and found nothing wrong in seeking his help and assistance. While he welcomed and was happy about his visit of Italy and Germany, Nehru was extremely careful in avoiding any contacts with them.

### ON THE FUTURE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Unlike Nehru who was deeply committed to a parliamentary democratic system, Subhas Bose expressed himself in favour of an authoritarian set up. It was his strong conviction that "Dictatorship of the Party both before and after Swaraj is won, that must be our slogan for the future."<sup>18</sup> He, therefore, strongly advocated the need for a strong centralized party which would rule dictatorially for some years. It would be a party certainly opposed to 'mid-Victorian parliamentary democracy'.

Fascinated by the disciplined organizational methods of Fascism, Bose stressed the vital need in India, of a political system of an authoritarian nature. He denounced openly the democratic system because of its inherent weaknesses to push through economic reforms on a socialistic basis. It may be noted that Subhas Bose's repudiation of democracy and his admiration for the Fascist organization coupled with the widest British propaganda, led many of his critics to brand him as a fascist. As a matter of fact Bose was not inclined to commit himself wholly to fascism or communism. He did not agree with Nehru when the latter said that "fundamentally the choice before the world today is one between some form of communism and some form of fascism, and I am all for the former, that is communism."<sup>19</sup> Subhas Bose was not prepared to restrict the choice between the two because that would mean "the end of the process of evolution."<sup>20</sup> Instead he believed in the interaction between Fascism and Communism as thesis and antithesis and he visualised the possibility of a synthesis emerging out

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 386 Letter to the United Press of India from Vienna and published in Indian papers on 15 March 1935.

<sup>19</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Statement to the Press, 12 December 1933, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6, op. cit., p. 134.

<sup>20</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., pp. 313-14.

in the next phase of the historical development. He was rather inclined to believe that such a synthesis between Fascism and Communism might be worked out in India.<sup>91</sup> Regardless of the merit of his assertion, the fact of the situation was that while Nehru found in the defeat of Fascism a necessary condition for the attainment of India's freedom, Subhas Bose pleaded with the Congress to forge an alliance with it for the same cause.

Despite all these clashes and conflicts, Bose was still keen that Nehru should lead the left group within the Congress. He was aware of Nehru's loyalty to Gandhi, and the role that he was playing in relation to the Right and Left wings of the Congress without joining either. Yet his contribution to the forward movement of the struggle was so praiseworthy that the entire leftists still looked upon him as a source of hope and inspiration and were ready to rally behind him.

#### DIVERGENT APPROACHES TO FOREIGN POLICY

Bose and Nehru had considerable differences in their understanding and approach to the question of a foreign policy for India and of developing international contacts. Although both were keen on making their own assessment of the changing international situation, they never advocated a common strategy for India. On the question of foreign policy, Bose insisted that the Congress, without bothering much about the internal policies of any country, should "aim at developing a nucleus of men and women in every country who would feel sympathetic towards India."<sup>92</sup> To carry on effective political campaign, he suggested that the Congress should have its agents in all parts of the world. He also wanted the Congress to develop international contacts through "the Indian Chambers of Commerce working in the sphere of international commerce."<sup>93</sup> Subhas Bose's outlook on international affairs seemed to be largely conventional and it appeared that he had no ideological handicaps in his search for international contacts.

<sup>91</sup>Chittar Singh Sharma, "Subhas Chandra Bose: The Indian Hero", in Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker (eds.), *Leadership and Political Institutions in India* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 78

<sup>92</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, Presidential Address at Haripura, 19 January 1938, in *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

Although Nehru was also in favour of foreign contacts, he did not like the idea of having "official representatives of the Congress in foreign countries."<sup>11</sup> Unlike Bose, Nehru had a much wider and scientific approach to international politics. His keen awareness of the danger to world peace arising out of the development of the forces in the West and his desire for Asian resurgence had, in no way impressed Subhas Bose. As a keen observer of the international trends, Nehru was able to sense the developing tension and crisis and their possible impact on India. He had a better grasp of the power politics of the class forces operating on the national front. He realised the potentiality of the middle class in the Indian and European society to assist the movement for vital social change. He was keen on enlisting the support of this section by the Congress as a matter of strategy for the struggle. "Our national policy, observed Nehru, "must be one which includes a great majority of them on the common basis of political independence and anti-imperialism and our international policy must be one of anti-fascism."<sup>12</sup>

Nehru's visit to Europe in 1936 coincided with the development of international crisis. The crisis coupled with the possibility of a world war raised several problems for India. He seriously pondered over them in the context of the external policies of the leading European countries. He was deeply impressed by the Soviet Union which, unlike Britain and France, consistently followed a policy of peace and democracy abroad. "Whatever doubts I had about internal happenings in Russia, I was quite clear in my mind about her foreign policy. This had been consistently one of peace and, . of fulfilling international obligations and supporting the cause of democracy abroad."<sup>13</sup> Further Soviet Union stood as the only "effective bulwark against Fascism in Europe and Asia.

This viewpoint was, however not appreciated by Subhas Bose, and Nehru subsequently noted with regret that Subhas Bose, as the president of the Congress, wholly disapproved of the international policy he was advocating.<sup>14</sup> It may be noted that between 1933 and

<sup>11</sup>Nehru's statement to the Press, Wardha, 28 April 1936, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 7, (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1975), p. 207.

<sup>12</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru *Unity of India Collected Writings (1937-40)*, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. p. 116

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-16

1936 Subhas Bose had been to Italy and Germany several times. In 1933 and 1934 he spent sometime in Geneva and took interest in the working of the League of Nations. When he realised that the League of the Nations was controlled by Britain and France, he started an agitation demanding India's withdrawal from the body. The demand, however, did not evoke much sympathy in the Congress circles.

Towards the end of his stay in Europe, he established contacts with Nehru and held discussions about the political situation in India and the possible methods of continuing the struggle. Despite their differences, Bose was still keen that Nehru should lead the left-wing of the Congress. In his letter of 13 March 1936, Bose wrote from Austria, "the personal factor does not count at all with me and personally I am prepared for any line which the public interest demands."<sup>22</sup>

#### ON THE ISSUE OF PLANNING AND OFFICE ACCEPTANCE

With the sacrifices that stood to his credit, it was quite natural that Subhas Bose should succeed Nehru as the Congress President in 1938. Bose was aware of the vacillating attitude of Nehru and Gandhi. Yet he was determined to give a concrete shape to some of the Congress resolutions adopted earlier. In his presidential address to the Haripura Congress in 1938 he announced his decision to set up a centralised planning body as a part of his revolutionary programme. Nehru was chosen as the President of the Planning Committee which was inaugurated in Bombay on 17 October 1938. Though the choice of the President seemed ideal, Nehru's vague and extremely cautious approach led the working of the committee far different from what Bose had anticipated in the beginning. Serious differences had also cropped up between Nehru and H.V. Kamath who was then the Secretary of the Committee and the public recriminations between them ultimately led to Kamath's resignation.<sup>23</sup> All this had greatly distress-

<sup>22</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, op. cit., p. 169

<sup>23</sup>H.V. Kamath was Secretary to the National Planning Committee during 1938-39. Nehru received certain complaints about him for "taking aggressive part in controversial policies." As a matter of Policy, Nehru wanted the Secretaries to keep away from controversial issues. Kamath, however did not agree

ed Bose whose desire to do something for socialising agricultural and industrial system, met with a sudden rebuff.

It may be recalled that both Nehru and Subhas Bose were stoutly opposed to the idea of office-acceptance by the Congress and had spoken so strongly and consistently against the Government of India Act of 1935 and the federal scheme provided by it. In his speech at the Subjects Committee meeting held at Lucknow on 11 April 1936 Nehru said that "any idea of acceptance of office tends to reformism."<sup>140</sup> However when the Working Committee met at Wardha and decided that the Congress should accept office, it became a fait accompli for both.

#### ON THE FORMATION OF A COALITION IN ASHAN AND BENGAL

Subhas Bose clashed with Nehru and Gandhi on the question of a coalition ministry in Bengal and Assam after the election. Bengal was under a coalition government formed by the Krishak Praja Party (a regional party with radical programme) and the Muslim League. Bose insisted that the Congress should forge an alliance with the Krishak Praja Party and form a coalition government without the Muslim League. Nehru and Gandhi did not favour the idea and so the Congress rejected it. Nehru's arguments went counter to those of Subhas Bose as he regarded any alliance with non-Congress elements clearly as a reactionary move.<sup>141</sup> Characterising Nehru's argument as that of a "doctrinaire politician", Bose challenged Nehru to visit the provinces and make a realistic assessment of the political forces there. If the Congress could form its own ministries in seven provinces, there was no reason why it should not in the two where it could enter into coalitions. However he would have heartily welcomed if the party had decided to scrap the policy of office acceptance for the whole country.<sup>142</sup>

with Nehru and offered to resign on 22 June 1937. See Jawaharlal Nehru's letter to Subhas Bose, 21 June 1939 in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* vol. 9 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979), pp. 397-98.

<sup>140</sup> S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>141</sup> Mihir Bose, *The Lost Hero: A Biography of Subhas Bose*, op. cit., p. 134.

<sup>142</sup> Sagar K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads: The Work of Subhas Chandra Bose (1935-40)* op. cit., p. 125.

## DIFFERING ASSESSMENT OF THE WAR SITUATION

In spite of their differences, the relationship between Bose and Nehru remained somewhat cordial until the former completed his first term as president of the Congress. Bose was careful enough to abstain from doing anything that might offend Nehru and Gandhi. Even in the selection of the members of the Working Committee, he had not departed from the old practice. "It must be understood that all important decisions were taken by the Working Committee as a body. The president was first among equals."<sup>103</sup>

But the September 1938 session of the AICC was held in an unusually tense situation in which the polarisation between the Right and Left wings of the Congress became rather imminent on the question of a correct policy to be adopted in the context of another European War. The acrimonious debate on the Civil Liberties Resolution which ultimately led to the walk out of seventy three members of the Left group was criticised by Gandhi who did not like the sympathetic attitude of the president towards them.<sup>104</sup> Unlike Gandhi and Nehru, Bose firmly believed that Britain would not grant independence merely because India's demand was just. The only course open to the country was, therefore, to prepare for an armed struggle.

After the Munich Pact in September 1938, Bose actually started a national campaign "to prepare the Indian people for a national struggle which should synchronise with the coming war in Europe."<sup>105</sup> This move did not find favour with Nehru and others, even though Nehru was associated with almost all anti-war resolutions of the Congress from 1927-38. When the war broke out in September 1939, Bose naturally expected Nehru to take the lead and declare immediate non-cooperation with the British war effort. Surprisingly "not only did Nehru not adopt this policy, but he used all his influence in order to prevent the Congress from

<sup>103</sup>J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi. His Life and Thought*, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>104</sup>Referring to the walkout, Gandhi wrote in his *Harijan* under the title "That Unfortunate Walk-out" on 15 October 1938, and commented on the partial attitude of the President towards them. See *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 67 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1976), p. 401.

<sup>105</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-42)*, op. cit., p. 332.

embarrassing the British Government while war was on."<sup>104</sup> Subhas bitterly criticised Nehru's statement of 20 May 1940 that "launching of a civil disobedience campaign at a time when Britain is engaged in a life and death struggle would be an act derogatory to India's honour."<sup>105</sup> He got the clue from a similar statement of Gandhi that both were for a compromise with Britain on the policy to be adopted by the Congress during the war.<sup>106</sup> Events that followed, however proved that his criticism was not well founded. In November 1940, Gandhi started his civil disobedience campaign and all the Congress ministers who took part were put behind the bars.

The friction between Nehru and Bose was more fundamental than the fear of a possible compromise with Britain. Nehru's whole approach to the war was from an anti-Fascist ideological point of view. As stated earlier he was absolutely clear in his mind that India should fight against Fascism, if necessary, even by cooperating with Britain. He could never think of India even "passively linking up with the Axis powers."<sup>107</sup> But Subhas Bose, whose understanding of the War situation was wholly negated by his hatred towards Britain, failed to appreciate Nehru's point of view. He was inclined to believe that Britain would be defeated in the war leading to the complete break up of the Empire. In such a situation, India could hope to win her independence only "if she played her part in the war against Britain and collaborated with those powers that were fighting Britain."<sup>108</sup> Bose was, thus, firm in his determination to join the fight against Britain.

#### NEHRU'S RESPONSE TO BOSE'S RE-ELECTION

The re-election of Subhas Chandra Bose as President in 1939 in a hot contest again Pattabhi Sitaramayya raked up a great contro-

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 341

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 344

<sup>106</sup>Gandhi made a statement that "I do not want Britain to be defeated. That is not the way of non violence". Narendra Nath Mitra (ed.) *Janak Annual Register* (July-December 1940), vol. 2 (Calcutta Annual Register Office, 1940) p. 217

<sup>107</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-42*, op. cit., p. 348

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 345

versy virtually dividing the Congress into two groups. Pattabhi lost, despite the open and active support he received from Gandhi and his followers. Soon after the election seven members of the Working Committee who had earlier issued a statement in support of Pattabhi thought it proper to resign.<sup>111</sup> But Nehru was reluctant to identify himself with them. He issued a public statement on 26 January 1939, clarifying his position in the controversial presidential election. Rejecting the view that any principle or programme was involved in the election as claimed by Subhas Bose, Nehru said that both himself and Bose could serve the cause and the Congress better without office and so he was not favourably disposed to the latter's re-election. "I was equally clear that Subhas Bose should not stand. I felt that his and my capacity for effective work would be lessened by holding this office at this stage. I told Subhas Bose so."<sup>112</sup> Nehru disliked the idea of Bose's re-election for other reasons too. He felt that the first term of his presidency had hardly made any difference to the policy of the Congress and that he had paid little attention to the organizational matters. As a matter of fact, Bose was largely preoccupied with the local affairs of Bengal that he hardly found enough time to manage the affairs of the AICC.<sup>113</sup> Nehru was in favour of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad becoming the president for the year. Subhas Bose, however created an impression that his contest was a symbolic fight for a bold and progressive policy for the Congress and that it was no longer possible for compromises between different and incompatible groups of the Congress.

Bose, during his election campaign, had projected the issue 'Federation' which according to him was the real bone of contention involved in the election. However, Nehru strongly felt that wrong issues were being raised to confuse the situation. On the question of 'Federation', the attitude of the Congress was definite and unambiguous, and he himself had repeatedly expressed it every-

<sup>111</sup>For details of the statement of Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad Jairam das Daulatram, J. B. Kripalani, Jarnail Singh, Shankar Rao Deo and Bhulabhai Desai, see Sisir K. Bose (ed.) *Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>112</sup>Statement of Jawaharlal Nehru, Almora, 26 January 1939, in Sisir K. Bose (ed.) *Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>113</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Where Are We?", in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9, op. cit., p. 514.

where. "It seems to be monstrous", Nehru asserted, "for any Congressman to think in terms of compromising on Federation."<sup>114</sup> The alleged compromise on 'Federation, was therefore not an issue at all.

### Bose's BITTER COMMENTS ON NEHRU

In the midst of the crisis that arose out of this unhappy relation with Nehru, Bose felt deeply annoyed with his letters and statements which were highly critical of him. In an unusually long letter to Nehru on 28 March 1939, Bose sought certain clarifications on what he called the apparent contradiction of Nehru on various points. Despite his high regards for Nehru, whenever he approached him for advice, Nehru used to give vague and non-committal replies. Nehru was critical of the election campaign launched by Subhas Bose and his followers in his own support. But he had conveniently ignored the campaign organized on a much larger scale by Patel and others in support of Patabhi. The entire machinery of the Congress ministries and the organizations like "Gandhi Seva Sangh" and "Charkha Sangh" besides the provincial Congress Committees were fairly used to canvass support. "The full weight of Gandhi's name and prestige" was brought in to influence the delegates.<sup>115</sup> Ignoring all these, Nehru chose to publicly criticise Bose for his election appeal.<sup>116</sup>

Bose was equally annoyed with Nehru's public statement when twelve members of the Working Committee resigned<sup>117</sup> and

<sup>114</sup> Statement of Jawaharlal Nehru, Almora, 26 January 1939, in Sisir K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>115</sup> See L.S. Bora's letter to Nehru, 28 March 1939, in Sisir K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op. cit., pp. 112-13.

<sup>116</sup> Nehru issued a press statement on the Congress presidential election on 26 January 1939. In that statement Nehru said, "Personally I do not see what principles or programmes are at stake in this election. I do not want it to be said at the end of the contest that a particular programme had been rejected when in fact it was not an issue." For the text of the statement see, Jawaharlal Nehru's press statement, 26 January 1939, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9, op. cit., pp. 472-73.

<sup>117</sup> Twelve members sent their resignation on 22 February 1939. These members were—(1) Abulkalam Azad, (2) Vallabhbhai Patel, (3) Sarojini Naidu, (4) Rajendra Prasad, (5) Bhulabhai Desai, (6) Patabhi Sitaramayya, (7) Shankar Rao Deo, (8) Han Krishna Mahatab, (9) Knpalani, (10) Abdul Gaffar Khan, (11) Jamnalal Bajaj, and (12) Jairamdas Desai.

he felt it "unworthy" of a person like Nehru to do so. The ambiguous character of that statement was all the more surprising because it could create an impression in the public mind that he too resigned from the Working Committee without actually doing so. Bose pinpointed that the indecisive attitude of Nehru in a crisis was the glaring weakness of his personality. "When a crisis comes", wrote Subhas Bose, "you often do not succeed in making up your mind one way or the other—with the result that to the public you appear as if you are riding two horses."<sup>112</sup>

Bose was often "puzzled and perplexed" at Nehru's stand on different occasions. In his statement of 22 February 1939, Nehru had opposed the re-election of Bose. But he had earlier expressed himself in favour of Subhas Bose contesting as a candidate of the left. Subsequently, in his Almora statement, he stressed only the importance of principles and programmes forgetting the persons in the contest. This confusing and contradictory approach of Nehru, greatly irritated Subhas Bose who listed a number of such instances in his letter to the bitter embarrassment of Nehru.

Bose accused him of pleading the case of Patel and others like "an advocate" who "is usually more eloquent than his client".<sup>113</sup> Nehru had earlier objected to the statement of Bose casting aspersions on Patel and others. When Bose subsequently took up the matter with Patel and others for a personal clarification, the latter denied having any grievance against him. Bose, however, felt that Nehru was unnecessarily provoking a controversy over the so-called "aspersion affair". He was also constrained to think from all these, that Nehru was deliberately trying to discredit him in public. "... I may tell you", wrote Subhas Bose to Nehru, "that since the presidential election, you have done more to lower me in the estimation of the public than all the twelve ex-members of the Working Committee put together."<sup>114</sup>

In his letter of 4 February 1939, Nehru sought some clarifications on Bose's election statements containing "a lot of talk of 'leftists' and 'rightists'" without reference to the distinct policies or programmes. His frequent expressions of these words, however,

<sup>112</sup>Subhas Bose's letter to Nehru, 28 March 1939, in Sisir K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads. The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op-cit., p. 113.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

gave the impression that Gandhi and his supporters in the Working Committee were the Rightists and their opponents, the Leftists. This, according to Nehru, was "an entirely wrong description" for strong language and criticism used against the old Congress leadership was no basis of leftism in politics.<sup>121</sup>

An important point of Nehru's confrontation with Subhas Bose was that the latter had not sufficiently clarified his policy in national and international affairs. Repudiating the charge Bose pointed out that he had made the national policy abundantly clear in his presidential speech at Tripuri Congress and that was "to force issue of swaraj with the British government" and to have a detailed plan for guiding the States' Peoples movement simultaneously throughout the country.<sup>122</sup> In fact much before the Tripuri Congress, Bose recalled that he had conveyed to Nehru the very same ideas when he called on him at Santiniketan and later at Anand Bhavan. He, therefore, naturally concluded that the boot was on the other leg. If any one had to clarify his policy, it was none else than Jawaharlal Nehru. His statements, according to Bose, were too vague and uninspiring particularly on vital international problems. As an instance, he pointed out a resolution which Nehru moved in the Working Committee meeting "seeking to make India an asylum for Jews."<sup>123</sup> Though the resolution was not approved by the Working Committee, it amply proved his lack of understanding of the basic principle of foreign policy as the nation's self-interest. Subhas Bose further added that the "Franco Soviet Pact and the Czechoslovak-Soviet Pact" should have been an eyeopener to Nehru, and "Frothy sentiments and pious platitudes do not make foreign policy."<sup>124</sup>

#### BOSE'S CHARGE OF BETRAYAL BY NEHRU

Referring to the allegation of inaction of Bose as president and his failure to hold a meeting even to transact the routine business,

<sup>121</sup>Letter to Subhas Chandra Bose, 4 February 1939, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9, *op cit.*, p. 481

<sup>122</sup>Sir K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads: The work of Subhas Chandra Bose (1933-40)*, *op cit.*, p. 116

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., p. 117

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

he retorted that the resignation of twelve members whose refusal to cooperate with the president was solely responsible for it. Bose regretted that instead of appreciating the difficult situation which the president had to face since his re-election, Nehru openly accused him of creating a stalemate in the functioning of the Congress.<sup>125</sup>

As a first step towards the smooth working of the Congress, the president should have been allowed to form a new Working Committee. All his effort for it was frustrated at Tripuri Congress by Pandit Pant's resolution<sup>126</sup> which was patently an unconstitutional move. However, what shocked him most was the meaningful silence of Nehru for a fortnight before the Tripuri Congress when the working of the organization had almost come to a halt following the resignation of the members. But surprisingly, within seven days after the session, he started a public agitation against the president. This according to Bose, conclusively proved the basic prejudice of Nehru against him. What hurt his feelings was that, when Bose was severely being attacked by the Rightists, Nehru had neither a word of protest nor a word of sympathy for him.<sup>127</sup> All these gave him the impression that Nehru had turned hostile and joined hands with the Rightists in their common strategy of isolating and discrediting him.

In his statement of 22 February 1939, Nehru once again accused the president of interfering with the local Congress disputes and acting in a partisan manner favouring a particular group or party. Expressing his strong feelings Nehru said "It pains me to see that in the very heart of our organization, new methods are being introduced which can only lead to local conflicts spreading to higher planes."<sup>128</sup> Repudiating the allegation, Bose characterized the statement as an act of impropriety because Nehru was least bothered about ascertaining the facts. The least that he could do was to make an enquiry before rushing to make such serious charges in public.

<sup>125</sup> Nehru sent a telegram to Subhas Bose seven days after the Tripuri Congress blaming him for the stalemate in the Congress. For details see *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>126</sup> Pant's resolution made it obligatory for the president to nominate the members of the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhi.

<sup>127</sup> Nehru's telegram to Subhas Bose, in Sastri K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op.cit., p. 119.

<sup>128</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, op.cit., p. 326.

### CRITICISM OF THE SOCIALIST CREDENTIALS OF NEHRU

In his letter of 28 March 1939, to Nehru, Bose made an attempt to question the socialist credentials of Nehru. The latter had stated earlier that he was an individualist and as such did not represent any particular person, group or party.<sup>122</sup> At the same time he called himself "a socialist—sometimes, a full-blooded socialist."<sup>123</sup> To Bose, this was an apparent contradiction in Nehru. He was at a loss to understand how an individualist could be a socialist at all. Socialism, as he understood, could be established only through mass organization and mass movement. He wondered how Nehru could be sincere to his political creed by holding on an independent non-aligned position in the Congress. By holding such a position one could be popular with all groups and parties. But certainly one could not think of translating socialism into reality except through organized parties. "How socialism can ever come into existence through individualism of your type is also an enigma to me..."<sup>124</sup> Refuting the argument on the point, Nehru stated in his reply of 3 March 1939 that he was an individualist by temperament and training, and "intellectually a socialist", and so there was no contradiction in the two terms that he used earlier. He also added that his socialism never suppressed his individuality.<sup>125</sup>

### ON THE QUESTION OF UNITY

A significant point of friction between Nehru and Bose was about the idea of national unity. The former was extremely cautious about the maintenance of unity in the organization and restrained from doing anything that might precipitate a split. The

<sup>122</sup>In his letter of 4 February 1939 Nehru wrote to Subhas Bose; "I function individually without any group or any second person to support me, although I am happy enough to possess the confidence of many.", For full text of the letter see Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, op.cit., pp. 307-12.

<sup>123</sup>Sisir K. Bose, *Crossroads; The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op. cit., p. 121

<sup>124</sup>Ibid

<sup>125</sup>Letter to Subhas Chandra Bose, Allahabad, 5 April 1939, in S. Gopat (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9, op. cit., p. 549

latter, on the other hand, was quite rigid in his attitude and always stood for "unity of action and not unity of inaction."<sup>123</sup> He was not apologetic about 'splits' and never regarded them as evils by themselves. He firmly believed that splits sometimes helped to strengthen the organization ensuring steady progress.

He criticised Nehru for compromising many a time his principled stand in the name of unity. Whether it was on the question of Gandhi-Irwin Pact or on the question of the Congress accepting office after the election of 1937, the shift in his stand was strongly deplored by Subhas Bose. Far from appreciating it, on the ground of unity, he regarded it as an apparent weakness of Nehru's personality. This characterization was based on Subhas Bose's conviction that, "unity in a revolutionary movement is not an end in itself but only a means."<sup>124</sup> Though Nehru was opposed to the proposed 'Federal Scheme', Bose had some reservations about the former's ability to stick to it, in case a majority in the Congress favoured its acceptance. However what irritated him most was that in utter disregard of the cause of socialism and Leftism of which Nehru was the most vocal champion, he now preferred to remain with all those who were its known enemies.

### CHARGES AND COUNTER CHARGES

In his letter of 4 February 1939, Nehru pointed out a number of serious lapses on the part of Subhas Bose as president of the Congress. That the vital questions like the 'Federation' was not discussed and that he was a weak and ineffective president functioning "more as a speaker than as a directing president,"<sup>125</sup> was attributed to him. Refuting the allegation, Bose blamed Nehru for his intemperate behaviour in many Working Committee meetings. His talkative and inconsistent nature, Bose pointed out, were largely responsible for most of the difficulties faced by the president.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>123</sup>Sisir K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>125</sup>Letter to Subhas Bose, 4 February 1939, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9, op. cit., p. 482.

<sup>126</sup>Sisir K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op. cit., p. 123.

Another issue for which both blamed each other was about the enactment of the Bombay Trades Disputes Bill. Nehru's criticism was that Subhas Bose, as president, did nothing, to get some of its obnoxious provisions altered. Reacting to it, Bose asserted that, short of breaking his relation with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who had thrown his full weight behind the enactment, he had done everything possible to prevent it. But his effort became fruitless because of the open support the Bill received from the powerful lobby of Gandhi. Even a section of the Bombay C.S.P. lent its support to the legislation.<sup>122</sup> In the circumstances Bose honestly felt that Nehru could have acted more effectively in view of his tremendous capacity to influence Gandhi and others. But, for reasons best known to him, he decided not to act and remained a silent spectator throughout.

#### Bose's INDICTMENT OF NEHRU

Subhas Bose was greatly unhappy with Nehru's role in the Tripuri Congress. He held Nehru responsible for creating a wedge among Congressmen. Rejecting Nehru's claim that he worked hard to ensure cooperation among the members, Bose told him in no uncertain terms that the Tripuri resolution<sup>123</sup> was a calculated move to put Gandhi against him, and thereby to isolate him. Though Nehru remained neutral at the time of voting, he did not raise his voice against it. He had also no comment to offer when Sardar Patel remarked that Subhas Bose's "re-election would be harmful to the country's cause."<sup>124</sup>

In his letter entitled "Tripuri and After" addressed to Amaya Nath Bose in England on 17 April 1939 Bose made some highly critical reference to Nehru's hostile attitude to him. With the injured feelings of a man in utter sorrow, he wrote,

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 124

<sup>123</sup>The Tripuri resolution requested the president to nominate the members of the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhi. For the text of the Resolution see *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 69 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1977), p. 80.

<sup>124</sup>Sir K. Bose (ed.), *The Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose* (1938-40), op. cit., pp. 132-33.

Nobody has done more harm to me personally and to our cause in this crisis than Pandit Nehru. If he had been with us—we would have had a majority. Even his neutrality would have probably given us a majority. But he was with the 'Old Guard' at Tripuri. His open propaganda against me has done me more harm than the activities of the 12 stalwarts. What a pity.<sup>140</sup>

The crisis that followed the Tripuri resolution ultimately led to the resignation of Subhas Bose who found it impossible to carry on as president in the face of mounting opposition. Letters and telegrams exchanged between him and Gandhi about the formation of the Working Committee, proved to be of no avail. In his last letter addressed to Subhas Bose from Sodepore on 29 April 1939, Gandhi wrote "Knowing your own views and knowing how you and most of the members differ in fundamentals, it seems to me that if I gave you names, it would be an imposition on you."<sup>141</sup> This letter of Gandhi only confirmed the stand taken by the opponents of Subhas Bose and he had no alternative but to quit the office. However, the most interesting aspect of the crisis was that most of the socialists and radicals who had supported his re-election, were not with him afterwards.

#### IDEOLOGICAL AND TEMPERAMENTAL DIFFERENCES

It may be noted that a meeting of the AIICC was called at Calcutta on 29 April 1939 to consider the crisis created by the Tripuri resolution and to find a way out of the impasse. Subhas Bose first read out Gandhi's letter of 29 April 1939 and then informed the members as to how his conversation with Gandhi and some members of the old Working Committee failed to iron out the differences. He then made a statement tendering his resignation and requested Sarojini Naidu to preside over the meeting.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Letter to Amiya Nath Bose, 17, April 1939, in Sisir K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, *op. cit.*, n. 144b

<sup>141</sup> D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mahandas Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 5, *op. cit.*, p. 102

<sup>142</sup> For Subhas Bose's statement at the time of his resignation, see *Ibid.*, p. 103

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<sup>128</sup>The Tripuri resolution requested the president to nominate the members of the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhi. For the text of the Resolution see *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 69. (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1977), p. 80.

<sup>129</sup>Sir K. Bose (ed.), *The Crossroads—The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op. cit., pp. 132-33.

Nobody has done more harm to me personally and to our cause in this crisis than Pandit Nehru. If he had been with us—we would have had a majority. Even his neutrality would have probably given us a majority. But he was with the 'Old Guard' at Tripuri. His open propaganda against me has done me more harm than the activities of the 12 stalwarts. What a pity.<sup>140</sup>

The crisis that followed the Tripuri resolution ultimately led to the resignation of Subhas Bose who found it impossible to carry on as president in the face of mounting opposition. Letters and telegrams exchanged between him and Gandhi about the formation of the Working Committee, proved to be of no avail. In his last letter addressed to Subhas Bose from Sodepore on 29 April 1939, Gandhi wrote "Knowing your own views and knowing how you and most of the members differ in fundamentals, it seems to me that if I gave you names, it would be an imposition on you."<sup>141</sup> This letter of Gandhi only confirmed the stand taken by the opponents of Subhas Bose and he had no alternative but to quit the office. However, the most interesting aspect of the crisis was that most of the socialists and radicals who had supported his re-election, were not with him afterwards.

#### IDEOLOGICAL AND TEMPERAMENTAL DIFFERENCES

It may be noted that a meeting of the AICC was called at Calcutta on 29 April 1939 to consider the crisis created by the Tripuri resolution and to find a way out of the impasse. Subhas Bose first read out Gandhi's letter of 29 April 1939 and then informed the members as to how his conversation with Gandhi and some members of the old Working Committee failed to iron out the differences. He then made a statement tendering his resignation and requested Sarojini Naidu to preside over the meeting.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>140</sup>Letter to Amiya Nath Bose, 17, April 1939, in Sisir K. Bose (ed.), *Crossroads: The Works of Subhas Chandra Bose (1938-40)*, op. cit., p. 144b

<sup>141</sup>D G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 5, op. cit., p. 102

<sup>142</sup>For Subhas Bose's statement at the time of his resignation, see *Ibid.*, p. 103

Nehru's response, at that stage, was somewhat positive. Despite his differences with Bose, he felt that the attitude of the opponents was not conducive for a solution. He regretted the total absence of the spirit of good will and accommodation among them. Appealing to all members to consider dispassionately the issues involved in the crisis, he said "I do not want that there should be any party feelings or dissension in the Congress" which would only weaken the organization. He then pleaded with all to do their "utmost to bury the hatchet."<sup>143</sup> With a view to solving the problem of the formation of the Working Committee, Nehru proposed that the old Working Committee should continue to hold office and also suggested that the president should nominate two members in place of Jaminalal Bajaj and Jairamdas Daulatram who were not in a position to continue in view of the illness of one and the imprisonment of the other. Subhas Bose, however, declared that he could not withdraw his resignation and Nehru had no choice but to accept the inevitable. Later, expressing his deep anguish over the resignation of Bose, Nehru observed, "But it is idle to ignore the differences that exist and tend to grow. Those differences are partly ideological, and even more temperamental, with a strong background of mutual suspicion."<sup>144</sup> Disagreeing with Gandhi, he remarked that the re-election of Subhas Bose was not a vote of confidence against any person or policy, for there was no such programme before the voters. It was an expression of desire to mend things as stood in the organization.

Fearing a possible split in the Congress which Nehru wanted to avoid at all cost, he took the bold initiative for a settlement. Subhas Bose was, however, adamant and decided to act independently. This was clear from his subsequent statement which he made at the All India Forward Bloc Conference, held at Nagpur on 18 June 1940. There he said: "Differences had become so fundamental between the Right wing and the Left wing, that a split—whether permanent or temporary—had become inevitable".<sup>145</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Nehru's Speech at the AICC meeting in Calcutta, 29 April 1939, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9, op. cit., p. 562.

<sup>144</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India: Collected Writings (1938-40)*, op. cit., pp. 161-62.

<sup>145</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose, "All Power of the People", in *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose* op. cit., p. 119.

### THE FATAL STEP OF SUBHAS BOSE

Soon after his resignation on 29 April 1939, Subhas Bose proceeded to form a radical progressive party within the Congress. His aim was to bring under its banner all the left and radical elements in the Congress as he had two main expectations to be fulfilled in future. First his idea was to muster enough organizational strength to fight more effectively the Gandhi wing, and secondly he should, in future, rely on his own strength to lead the struggle in the event of a major crisis and the Gandhi group refused to cooperate.<sup>114</sup>

The formation of the 'Forward Bloc' invited the wrath of many and he was accused of deliberately creating an internal crisis in the Congress. Without feeling perturbed, Bose instantly retorted that an internal crisis was inevitable "in view of the uncompromising attitude of the present High Command and their failure to move with the times."<sup>115</sup> He was in no mood to surrender and thereby to avoid the crisis. This, however, revealed the political calculation of Bose who was still entertaining an illusion that the future struggle would mainly depend upon the radical and militant forces who alone possessed the will for suffering and sacrifice hadly needed for freedom.

### NEHRU'S VIEWS ON THE FORWARD BLOC

Nehru regarded the new party 'Forward Bloc', as a dangerous signal in the national politics. In his view "it is, so far as is known at present, a negative grouping, an anti-bloc whose sole binding cement is dislike of, or opposition to, the individuals or groups that control the Congress today."<sup>116</sup> There was hardly any positive policy or ideology to its credit. Its unrestrictive and open door policy, as far as its membership was concerned might pave the way for the "adventurist and opportunist elements" to get into it. Nehru also visualised the possibility of fascist and communal

<sup>114</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-47)*, op. cit., p. 334

<sup>115</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, "Genesis of the Forward Bloc", in *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>116</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India Collected Writings (1937-40)*, op. cit. p. 157

elements exploiting it to promote their nefarious activities by taking a more aggressive and virulent position against the Congress. Cautioning the people in the face of this development, he asserted "We must remember that Fascism grew in Europe under cover of radical slogans and popular phrases. It will be easy for Fascism to function under cover of our nationalism, and yet to give a wrong and dangerous bent to it."<sup>144</sup> He had also a genuine apprehension that the war policy of the Congress based on the obvious considerations of freedom and democracy on the one hand, and insistence on the country's independence on the other, might be twisted and made to cater to the needs of the Fascists. Anticipating the possibility of such a danger from the 'Forward Bloc', Nehru emphatically said "our antiwar policy must therefore be based on freedom and democracy and opposition to Fascism and imperialism."<sup>145</sup> In fact, he warned that a little twist in this policy could only make it a pro-Fascist one and that would be most suicidal for India.

Nehru was not opposed to bringing about certain changes in the Congress. But that change should grow organically from within. No one could ignore work and value already put in to provide a stable foundation of the movement. The 'Forward Bloc', far from appreciating this, would create hurdles leading to a complete disruption of the movement. Individuals and groups opposed to the 'Forward Bloc' will also make all-out effort to consolidate their positions by capturing and controlling the various committees within the organization and that might lead to serious clashes and conflicts.<sup>146</sup>

The birth of the 'Forward Bloc' was of some political embarrassment to Nehru. It sharpened the internal conflict among the Congress leaders. Those of the Gandhi wing took it as the greatest challenge since the death of C R Das in 1925. They were up in revolt to do everything possible to smash it.

Subhas Bose, on the other hand was equally determined to go ahead facing all odds. His immediate objective was to wean away from the spell of Gandhi and Nehru, all those radical and progressive elements and to bring about a Left consolidation. According to this tactical move "all possible means should be employed" to

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid*, p. 164

<sup>145</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid* p. 165

won independence and more precisely, "the Indian people should not be hampered by any philosophical notions like Gandhian non-violence, or any sentimentalism like Nehru's anti-Axis foreign policy."<sup>151</sup>

In the situation as stood then, Nehru naturally felt a bit upset. His political credentials, as the most vocal champion of the Left, were being challenged and it was not possible for anyone to avoid taking sides. Among the top leaders, he was the only one, who until then, had enjoyed the support of both the wings. However in the changed situation, when openly confronted by the 'Forward Bloc' he began to move to the Gandhi wing. He did not want to weaken the national organization at a critical moment of its struggle. This and his genuine fears about the dangerous consequences of the politics of the 'Forward Bloc', forced him to rally behind Gandhi.

According to Subhas Bose, Nehru started moving closer to Gandhi after 1937, and in 1939, he virtually became a close confident of the Gandhi wing. Subhas Bose's attempt to unite all the Left and radical groups to fight what he called the Rightwing leadership of Gandhi and Nehru ended in utter disaster. The Royists, the Congress Socialists and the National Fronters (or Communists) deserted the Left Consolidation Committee one after another.<sup>152</sup> Later developments only confirmed Bose's inability to understand the realities of power relations in the Congress politics.

During the war, both Gandhi and Nehru not only disapproved but also completely disassociated themselves with his plans for national liberation with Axis' aid. Nehru was convinced that his programme of action, even from a purely patriotic and nationalist standpoint, could not be justified because of its disastrous consequences. In 1942, when he was in Calcutta, Nehru came to know of Subhas Bose's plan to "lead an army to India to liberate it in cooperation with the Japanese." Expressing his complete disapproval of it, he said ". I would fight him for he was coming under Japanese auspices, under Japanese control and much to the benefit of the Japanese. He was quite wrong in his methods when he thou-

<sup>151</sup>Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle (1920-47)*, op. cit., p. 337

<sup>152</sup>The Left Consolidation Committee was formed in Bombay in June 1939, in *Ibid*, pp. 404-05

ght that he could win the freedom of India with the help of the Japanese."<sup>144</sup>

### ON THE IDEA OF PAKISTAN

Subhas Bose was vehemently opposed to the very idea of Pakistan. He was, in fact, suspicious of the attitude of the Congress leaders on this question. To him, the most irritating aspect of the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru was their constitutionalism, reformism and compromising approach. In 1944, when Gandhi and Jinnah were discussing the Hindu-Muslim question in Bombay, Bose anticipated a possible compromise on the League's demand for Pakistan. In one of his broadcasts from Burma on 12 September 1944, he had expressed his fear and anxiety over it. He was firm in his view that the creation of Pakistan would only ruin the country economically, politically and culturally. Reiterating his firm resolve to work for a united and free India, Bose said "I vehemently oppose the Pakistan scheme for the vivisection of our motherland."<sup>145</sup> But when the Congress under the leadership of Nehru and Gandhi finally accepted the partition, Subhas Bose, unfortunately was no more to register his protest.

<sup>144</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Interview to the Press", Bombay, 23 June 1945, in S Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 14 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1982), p. 21.

<sup>145</sup>Warning Against Pakistan (Broadcast from somewhere in Burma, 12 September 1944) in *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op. cit., p. 223.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Nehru and M.N. Roy

THE two outstanding thinkers of modern Indian political thought who were once fascinated by Marxism, but later repelled by its practice, were Nehru and M.N. Roy. Disenchanted with the methods of communism in many ways, both began to search for a political alternative, in the first half of the present century. While Nehru, in the process finally accepted the philosophy of liberalism, Roy, after a brief period of his career as a staunch communist, finally developed a new philosophy of Radical Humanism or New Humanism. Gifted with impressive intellect, both had clearly demonstrated the rare ability to analyse contemporary issues and politics. Being the greatest political activists of their time, both were influenced by their own experiences and had developed their political ideas while leading or directing the Indian nationalist movement. Although caught in the web of Indian nationalism, they were intensely international in their basic outlook and the events and issues of world politics had, no doubt, a terrific impact on them.

Yet, for all their wisdom, knowledge and experience, Nehru and Roy were unable to maintain a level of understanding between them. They had apparently chosen divergent paths in their long political career and it was Nehru and not Roy, who dominated the political scene in India. When Roy, moved about for fifteen years from 1915 to 1930, on various revolutionary missions abroad, Nehru preoccupied with the nationalist struggle, was steadily moving up to a position of leadership of the movement. Even after his return to India, Roy did not succeed in his effort to direct the movement by wresting the leadership from Gandhi and Nehru. In fact he "remained both a cultural and political outsider and suffered as a result."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dennis Dalton, "Gandhi and Roy. The Interaction of Ideologies in India", in Subrata Ray (ed.), *Gandhi, India and the World* (Bombay, Nachiketa Publications Ltd., 1970), p. 147.

### ROY AS A REVOLUTIONARY

There were three distinct phases in the evolution of Roy's political career. In the first which lasted until 1919, Roy was a militant nationalist engaged in procuring arms and money for the terrorist-revolutionary activities in Bengal. In the second phase he became a Marxist and was very active in the communist movement first in Mexico and then in Russia, China and India. In the last and final phase, he emerged as a Radical Humanist and gave up Marxism in favour of some kind of liberal humanism.

Roy, like many of his contemporary Bengali intellectuals, started his political career as an extremist nationalist. He was involved in the revolutionary movements in Bengal even when he was a student.<sup>3</sup> In 1915, after the outbreak of the First World War, he left the country "in search of arms with naive ideas about revolution and international relations."<sup>4</sup> Roy travelled extensively through Burma, Indonesia, China, Japan and the Philippines before he reached U.S.A., in pursuit of his mission of an insurrection in India. It was in the United States that he adopted his new name—Manabendra Nath Roy. His original name was Narendra Bhattacharya. From U.S.A., Roy escaped to Mexico, where he came into contact with Michael Borodin, an agent of Comintern, but posing as a Russian commercial representative. His close association with Borodin was a turning point in his life in the sense that it was Borodin who initiated Roy "in the intricacies of Hegelian dialectics as the key to Marxism."<sup>5</sup> He had gone to Mexico as a nationalist, but from there, he left for Russia as a confirmed Marxist. In Mexico, Roy, the new convert to Marxism, founded the Communist Party, the first Communist Party outside the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup>

Recalling this political transformation he had in Mexico, Roy later wrote

<sup>3</sup>Roy was first attracted to the revolutionary "Yugantar" group and in 1910 he was sentenced to imprisonment in connection with the Howrah Conspiracy Case and was again arrested in 1915 in connection with his alleged complicity in a political dacoity in Calcutta.

<sup>4</sup>M N Roy's *Memories* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1964), p. 219.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>6</sup>G P Bhattacharya, M N Roy and Radical Humanism (Bombay: A J B H Wadia Publication, 1961), p. 1.

I left the land of my rebirth an intellectually freeman, though with a new faith. . . . I no longer believed in political freedom without the content of economic liberation and social justice. But I had also realized that intellectual freedom—freedom from the bondage of all tradition and authority—was the condition for any effective struggle for social emancipation.<sup>4</sup>

In November 1919, he left for Russia at the invitation of Lenin and there he grew into prominence because of his contribution to revolutionary strategy for communist activity in the colonial areas. He was an active participant in the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 and earned a name and a position for himself, despite his clash with Lenin on the colonial question. He was also elected to the presidium of the Communist International, and was for several years the Head of the Eastern Section. He visited China in 1925 as the emissary of the Communist International and made an unsuccessful attempt to guide the Chinese revolutionary movement.<sup>5</sup> In 1928, Roy broke away his association with the International and after a brief spell in Germany, he returned to India in 1930, nearly fifteen years after his departure from India.

Soon after his return, Roy was arrested and imprisoned for six years. On release he joined the Indian National Congress and worked quite enthusiastically for sometime. But when the World War broke out, he came into conflict with the Congress on the question of India's attitude to the problems posed by the war. For him the war was essentially a struggle between democracy and fascism and the victory of the former was a prerequisite for the liberation of the colonies. His rift with the congress ultimately led to his resignation from it, and in 1940, Roy founded the Radical Democratic Party. The break with the Congress also marked the beginning of his break with communism. Far from being a committed Marxist, he now became a critic of it. Although in December 1940, Roy founded the Radical Democratic Party, he soon became thoroughly disillusioned with the party's performance in the electoral

<sup>4</sup> M. N. Roy's *Memoirs*, op. cit., pp. 219-20.

<sup>5</sup> Roy presented a detailed account of his experience in China in his book, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in China*, which was first published in German language.

politics of 1946. Finding no hope for its political survival, he dissolved the party in 1948. Since then he started moving on an entirely new direction which finally led to the development of a Social Philosophy called New Humanism, which he continued to advocate till the end.

### **ROY-LENIN CLASHES ON THE COLONIAL QUESTION**

M.N. Roy played a crucial role in the Second Congress of the Communist International held from 19 July to 7 August 1920. Lenin had already prepared and circulated his thesis on the colonial and semicolonial countries. Roy, who had serious reservations about Lenin's formulations on the question, wrote an alternative thesis and submitted it to the Congress. It differed fundamentally with Lenin's in the sense, that Roy had made a completely "different evaluation of the revolutionary potential of the Indian middle class."<sup>1</sup> Though the Congress had finally adopted both the theses in a modified form, even the amended version clearly manifested Roy's disagreement with Lenin. Roy's main argument was that "the bourgeoisie even in the most advanced colonial countries, like India, as a class, was not economically and culturally differentiated from the feudal social order, therefore the nationalist movement was ideologically reactionary in the sense

<sup>1</sup>G.D. Overstreet and Marshall Waddillier, *Communism in India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1959), p. 28. The Indian Communist Party's version of the Roy-Lein clash on the revolutionary strategy was presented in an article published in the party Organ—*New Age* on 22 February 1970. There it was stated that "Roy opposed Lenin's thesis on the basis of a distorted understanding of Indian experience. He did not agree with the idea that the national bourgeoisie can play an anti-imperialist role. Hence he wanted deletion of item 5 of thesis No. II from Lenin's thesis where it was stated that the Communist International should support bourgeois democratic movements and enter into temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in colonial and backward countries. Roy wanted the communist international only to help build up the communist movement in India. And he wanted the Communist Party of India to confine exclusively to organizing the broad popular masses to fight for their class interests. Roy held several other erroneous anti-Marxist views on this question, for instance, on the role of Gandhi, the relation between the Communist in the East and the advanced capitalist countries."<sup>2</sup> "Lenin-Roy Controversy on Revolutionary Strategy". *New Age* (New Delhi), vol. XVII, no. 8, 22 February 1970, p. 9.

that the triumph would not necessarily mean a bourgeois democratic revolution."<sup>9</sup>

However, the fundamental point of difference was about the role of Gandhi as the leader of the mass movement. Lenin believed that Gandhi was a revolutionary, as against that Roy "maintained that he was a social reactionary though he might appear to be a political revolutionary."<sup>10</sup> In substance, Roy repudiated Lenin's contention that bourgeois nationalist movements were revolutionary in character and so the communists should support them. Lenin wanted communists to work with the bourgeois nationalist organizations because they were anti-imperialist and also because there were no well developed proletarian organizations at that time. Roy opposed this policy of united anti imperialist front on the ground that the workers and peasants were so hostile to the nationalist bourgeoisie that they could never join hands in their fight against imperialism. He insisted, on the other hand, that there were important proletarian organizations in those countries and the communists should actively collaborate with them in preference to the organizations of the national-bourgeoisie. As an example, Roy pointed out that "the revolutionary movement in India, in so far as the broad masses are concerned, has nothing in common with the national liberation movement."<sup>11</sup>

Lenin deleted from Roy's thesis the paragraph which was in conflict with his own views and placed the modified version before the Congress as 'supplementary thesis'. In the open session of the Congress, Roy reiterated his views that "the Comintern and the Communist Parties must work primarily in conjunction with the proletarian parties of the colonies and give moral and material support to the general revolutionary movement only through these parties."<sup>12</sup> In other words even the amended thesis, to some extent reflected the differences between Roy and Lenin. Roy's argument, in substance, was that there were two distinct movements in the dependent countries. One was the democratic nationalistic movement led by the bourgeoisie for political independence and

<sup>9</sup> M.N. Roy's *Memoirs*, op cit., p. 379.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>11</sup> G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India (1917-1922)*, vol. I (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1971), p. 162.

<sup>12</sup> K. Damodaran, "Marxism and India The Past", *Seminar* (Delhi), June 1974, p. 14.

the other was the mass movement of the poor workers and peasantry for their own economic and social liberation. In such a situation, the task of the Communist International, according to Roy, was, not only to prevent any attempt of the former to control the latter, but also to help the formation of communist parties which would lead the workers and peasants to revolution for the establishment of Soviet republics. The essence of the anti-imperialist struggle, he added, was not in strengthening "the nationalist aspirations of the native bourgeoisie", in any manner.<sup>12</sup> In the light of these arguments, Lenin's thesis was modified and in the final draft of the thesis, the communist parties were advised to support "by action the revolutionary liberation movements,"<sup>13</sup> rather than the bourgeois democratic liberation movements as recommended in the preliminary draft. It was also stated that "the Communist International has the duty of supporting the revolutionary movement in the colonies and backward countries only with the object of rallying the constituent elements of the future proletarian parties..."<sup>14</sup> It seems that the Comintern conceded this point and entrusted Roy with the responsibility of providing all possible assistance to the national revolutionary and communist movements in India and sufficient fund was put at his disposal for this purpose.

### **ROY'S ANALYSIS OF THE INDIAN SITUATION**

M.N. Roy was the first Indian communist who tried to analyse the Indian political situation and the interaction of the class forces in a Marxist framework. His first attack within the Comintern on bourgeois nationalist parties like the Indian National Congress had come during his famous disagreement with Lenin at the Second World Congress. There he had argued that the Comintern should pursue an extremist uncompromising policy and work through

<sup>12</sup>G D Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, op cit, p 29.

<sup>13</sup>Thesis on the National and Colonial Question adopted by The Second Comintern Congress, 28 July 1920, in Jane Degras (ed.), *The Communist International Documents (1919-1922)*, vol I (London, Oxford University Press, 1956), p 143

<sup>14</sup>Ibid

small organized revolutionary parties, by which, in India, he apparently meant, such terrorist groups as the Jugunter Party, and the Anushilan Samiti in Bengal. Roy had denounced the polities of the moderates who represented the Indian national bourgeoisie. In his assessment of the Indian situation, Roy found that the political tactics of the bourgeoisie were largely "determined by the desire to acquire concessions and support from the British government in order to further its own development . . ."<sup>14</sup> The economic and political concessions, according to him, were granted by the government not because of its fear of the Indian bourgeoisie, but because of the revolutionary mass movement, which was forcing the authorities to compromise "with that section of the people which was closer to themselves by class interest."<sup>15</sup>

Roy believed that the national bourgeoisie in India would eventually compromise with the rulers and settle for something less than complete independence. He, therefore, warned against the unreliability of the nationalist leaders, who, in his view, were bound to be a counter-revolutionary force in India and insisted that the Comintern should support only the revolutionary movement of the working class and the peasantry through the communist party. The Comintern, however, rejected the line and continued to stress the strategy of an anti-imperialist united front and national unity to achieve political independence.

In his Report on the Eastern Question, Roy, had, broadly classified, the colonial and semi-colonial countries into three—"areas where capitalism and class differentiation were well developed, where capitalism was on a low level and feudalism remained the backbone of society" and "where primitive conditions still prevail, where feudal patriarchalism is the social-order."<sup>16</sup> He placed India in the first category.

Roy was also a member of the "Eastern Commission", which drafted "The Thesis on the Eastern Question". This thesis specifically warned the Asian communist parties not to function as mere stooges of the national liberation movements. Instead they were

<sup>14</sup>M.N. Roy, *India in Transition* (Bombay: Nichiketa Publications, 1971), p 42.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>M.N. Roy, "Report on the Eastern Question", in G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India (1917-1922)*, vol I, op cit, p 536

asked to maintain their own initiative and independence even while cooperating with the nationalist leaders. However the thesis did not share Roy's view that the national bourgeoisie would ultimately betray the nationalist cause in more advanced countries like India.

Roy had also held an exaggerated view of the class forces in India. His estimate of five million workers and thirtyseven million landless peasants<sup>13</sup> in India at that time was far from real. It was on the basis of this highly inflated strength of the proletariat, that Roy reported to the Comintern that "although the Indian nationalist movement rested for the most part on the middle class, the downtrodden Indian masses would shortly blaze their own revolutionary trail."<sup>14</sup> Being conscious of the untrustworthy character of the national bourgeoisie, Roy insisted on developing communist parties in dependent colonies, rather than supporting the existing bourgeois nationalist movements. In his earlier thesis he had recommended the organization of 'peasants and workers' Soviets' as soon as possible.

At a secret meeting on the Colonial Commission held in Moscow, in 1922, Roy suggested that the tactics of the Indian communists should be to combine the independence movement, the labour organizations and the Kisan Sabhas, into one struggle. This was endorsed by the Commission. Shortly after, Roy moved in correspondence with various communist groups in India and directed them to link up their activities "with the left wing of the National Congress, the left wing of the trade union movement, the Khilafat movement and the Sikh movement to form a radical all India party."<sup>15</sup> This was to be formed within the Indian National Congress, but controlled by the communists.

#### STRATEGY FOR A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

By December 1921, it was clear that Roy, despite his sharp

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 163

<sup>14</sup>John Patrick Hartcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 14.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37

See M.N. Roy's letter to S.A. Dange, Berlin, 19 December 1922, in G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of Communist Party of India (1917-22)*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 594.

criticism of the National Congress, passionately desired to influence that organization. He had acknowledged, in his manifesto, which was prepared for the thirtysixth annual session of the Congress held at Ahmedabad, that the Congress was "the leader of the movement for national liberation", and appealed for the adoption of a liberal economic programme for the benefit of the poor workers and peasants. Later he presented the same favourite theme in his "*One Year of Non-cooperation: From Ahmedabad to Gaya*", in 1923.<sup>21</sup>

Roy had, by then, understood the character of the Congress which by all means, was a "heterogeneous collection of groups and individuals with widely different philosophies and aims."<sup>22</sup> Within the Congress there were groups and blocs which not only promoted factionalism but were also competing with one another for control of the organization. His tactical approach as he explained in a series of articles in "*Advance Guard*"<sup>23</sup> in 1922, consisted of two cardinal points. First, those Indians who had accepted the Communist ideology were to form an opposition group in the Congress with the sole aim of finally capturing its leadership. Second, attempts were to be made constantly to convert the left elements to communism through propaganda.<sup>24</sup>

In 1922, Roy prepared a comprehensive report on the Indian situation which was published in the form of a book entitled—*India in Transition*. The work was appreciated by the then Comintern leaders as a fine Marxist interpretation of Indian conditions. Contrary to the general notion, Roy's main contention in

<sup>21</sup>M.N. Roy and Evelyn Roy, *One Year of Non-Cooperation. From Ahmedabad to Gaya* (Calcutta: Communist Party of India, 1923) p. 11.

<sup>22</sup>G D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>23</sup>The original name of this journal was *Vanguard* which was changed to *Advance Guard* in 1922. Roy published it from Berlin in 1922. See G. Achakar (ed.), *Documents of the History of the C.P.I. (1917-22)*, Vol. I op. cit., p. 506. Roy also wrote a large number of books, letters, statements and manifestos, and despatched them to India along with the official organ of the Communist International, "*Impresso*". According to British intelligence, *Anrita Baazar Patrika* of Calcutta, *Atmasakti* of Calcutta, *Independent* of Allahabad and *Navayuga* of Guntur were some of the newspapers influenced by Roy's publications. (See G.D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, op. cit., pp. 41-42).

<sup>24</sup>G D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, op. cit., p. 45.

the book was that India "had almost ceased to be feudal, but it was not yet capitalist."<sup>26</sup> Analysing the nationalist movement in that background, Roy characterised the Indian National Congress as a bourgeois organization. Moderates and extremists were denounced as spokesmen of the Indian bourgeoisie though he recognized that many were having progressive views. Most of the nationalist leaders including Gandhi were condemned for their revivalist medieval approach to politics. Roy, then believed that the only solution to India's future lay in adopting the Marxist ideology. The strategy which he suggested to the Indian communists was that the latter should join the Congress party with a minimum Marxist programme of the political action. This was to enable them to gradually strengthen their own base and power, so as to make it a party of the proletariat to finally capture the nationalist movement.

In his correspondence with the Indian communists, Roy stressed the necessity of penetrating the All India Congress Committee, in order to save the Congress from its present degeneration. He also called for the creation of a Nationalist Party to get out of the political impasse.

Roy had high expectations from C.R. Das who presided over the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress in December 1922. His impression that C.R. Das would give a radical orientation to the Congress politics was however proved to be wrong. In fact the Gaya session was a great disappointment for him. Rejecting Roy's line of inevitability of a violent revolution,<sup>27</sup> C.R. Das declared, in his presidential address, his full faith in the principle of non-violence. In the circumstances, Roy thought that radicalisation of the Congress was possible only through a party of workers and peasants, and so, in 1923 steps were taken to

<sup>26</sup>G D. Parkh, Forward to M N Roy, *India in Transition*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup>The Communists had issued a "manifesto" to the Indian National Congress on the eve of the Congress session at Gaya in December 1922. It stated: "The British rule in India was established by force and is maintained by force; therefore it can and will be overthrown only by a violent revolution.... The people of India must adopt violent means, without which the foreign domination based upon violence cannot be ended. The people of India are engaged in this great revolutionary struggle. The Communist International is wholeheartedly with them." *Advance Guard*, 1 January 1923, quoted in G D. Overstreet and Marshall Wiedmiller, *Communism in India* *op. cit.*, p. 54.

organize a Workers and Peasants Party.

At the time of the Belgaum session of the Congress in 1924, Roy issued an "Appeal to the Nationalists" reiterating his earlier call for the organization of a Revolutionary Nationalist Party having confidence of the masses to push the struggle on a revolutionary course. The Party's programme, as he explained, was to include "national independence, abolition of feudalism and landlordism, nationalisation of land, mines and public utilities, and freedom of religion and worship."<sup>22</sup> Such a programme, he argued, would enthuse the people for a radical and vigorous political action.

Roy then found a saviour in the new leadership of Stalin whose approach virtually amounted to a reversal of the earlier strategy of the Comintern under the leadership of Lenin. The process of reversal was complete and explicit with the presentation of the "Colonial Thesis" to the Sixth Congress in 1928, though it was initiated as early as 1925 when Stalin adopted a class against class approach to the colonial problems. In his famous address to the students of the University of the Peoples of the East, on 18 May 1925, Stalin said that the Indian bourgeoisie betrayed the national revolution by compromising with imperialism. The task of the communists in India was, therefore, "to set up a nationalist and revolutionary coalition of workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals as a counterpoise to the coalition of the great bourgeoisie with the imperialists...." "The revolution cannot be victorious unless this alliance is broken."<sup>23</sup>

Encouraged by Stalin's speech, Roy reformulated his views on the Indian situation and presented it in 1926, in his book *Future of Indian Politics*. According to Roy, bourgeois nationalism in India ended in a complete compromise with imperialism. Reiterating his ideas which he had earlier presented to the Second Congress of the Communist International, Roy observed :

The social elements that will henceforth compose the movement for national liberation, are the petty intellectuals,

<sup>22</sup>John Patrick Haulcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>23</sup>Stalin, Speech to the Students of the Tutors—University of the East, in *Leninism*, quoted in K. Damodaran, "Marxism and India: The Past", *Seminar*, June 1974, p. 14.

artisans, small traders, peasantry and the proletariat. In the existing condition of the Indian society, all these belong to the oppressed and exploited class. The movement for national liberation will take place on the basis of the struggle between the exploiting and exploited classes. Henceforth the fight for national freedom in India becomes a class struggle approximating to the final stage.<sup>50</sup>

The class struggle, however, was to be intensified by the communist party as well as by a broadbased Peoples Party, consisting of the democratic allies of the proletariat. Roy believed that the fight for freedom would have to be led by the people themselves and they must have a broadbased organization of which the proletariat would be only one of the components. "In this party", he wrote, "the proletariat will stand side by side with the petty bourgeoisie and peasant masses, as the most advanced democratic class."<sup>51</sup> In other words, what Roy actually pleaded for, was the development of a democratic party consisting of peasants, workers and the petty bourgeoisie which will have a radical programme of agrarian reforms and a political programme of complete independence.<sup>52</sup>

#### Roy's CRITIQUE OF GANDHI

M.N. Roy was a persistent critic of Gandhi from the beginning of his active political career. In a sense, throughout the period of his stay abroad, he was mainly preoccupied with Gandhi's power, popularity and leadership. But ironically Gandhi seldom referred to Roy, in his speeches or writings, and even after Roy's return to India; Gandhi took scant notice of him.

As a Marxist, it was Roy's conviction that any attempt at social reconstruction based on traditional institutions within the existing value system, was doomed to failure and it could succeed only in restraining social progress. From this point of view, Roy

<sup>50</sup>M N Roy, *Future of Indian Politics* (London R. Bahop, 7 Bloomsbury Crescent, 1926), p. 95

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 114

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 117 According to Roy, "The proletariat will contribute the revolutionary driving forces, the peasantry will lend their massive weight; and the petty bourgeois intellectuals will bring in knowledge and education." (Ibid.)

could never appreciate Gandhian technique of Indian struggle or his revolutionary potential.

Roy's first detailed critique of Gandhi appeared in his book *India in Transition*<sup>22</sup> which was actually based on the debate between himself and Lenin at the 'Second Congress of the Communist International.' As mentioned earlier, it was in this Congress that Roy differed with Lenin, with respect to the assessment of the Indian situation and the role of Gandhi as the leader of the nationalist movement. Lenin believed that Gandhi was playing a progressive role, and "as an inspirer and leader of a mass movement, he was a revolutionary."<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, Roy maintained that the "nationalist movement was ideologically reactionary" and "as the present moment, Gandhi also tries to save the spiritual civilization of India through the aggrandizement of the merchants and manufacturers."<sup>24</sup>

Roy continued to propagate this view in his letters, articles and books since then, and it had influenced the thinking of the Indian communists in the early stages even though they criticised Roy later for his "left sectarian attitude."<sup>25</sup> His failure to understand the dynamism of Gandhi was clear when he described "Gandhism as the acutest and most desperate manifestation of the forces of reaction...."<sup>26</sup> Roy was away from the country for many years and that his assessment of Gandhi was based on inadequate and unreliable source of information about the Indian situation. This was fairly evident, when he observed, that the Congress was dead and that "The impending wane of Gandhism signifies the collapse of the reactionary forces and their total elimination from the political movement."<sup>27</sup>

He believed that the Indian nationalist movement inspired by the Gandhian cult, could not succeed because of its apparent contradictions; and "the imminent collapse of Gandhism", Roy predicted, "will close a romantic and exciting chapter of the Indian

<sup>22</sup> Roy wrote *India in Transition* in collaboration with Aban Mukherji and it was published from Geneva in 1922. In the last chapter of this book, Roy has presented his criticism of Gandhi.

<sup>23</sup> M N. Roy's *Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 379.

<sup>24</sup> M N. Roy, *India in Transition*, op. cit., pp. 202-03

<sup>25</sup> "Lenin-Roy Controversy on Revolutionary Strategy", *New Age*, Vol. 17, no. 8, 22 February 1970, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> M N. Roy, *India in Transition*, op. cit., pp. 203-04

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 204

national movement."<sup>13</sup> In his characteristic style, Roy again declared that "Gandhism is nothing but petty-bourgeois humanitarianism hopelessly bewildered in the clashes of the staggering forces of human progress."<sup>14</sup>

In his book *India's Problem and its Solution*, published towards the end of 1922, Roy criticised the Congress for its betrayal of the revolutionary forces. He also directed a scathing attack on what he called Gandhi's medievalism and conservatism. Gandhi, complained Roy, made a religion of nationalism by simply exploiting the ignorance of the masses. By constantly appealing to the medieval mentality of the masses, Gandhi was deliberately discouraging all possible revolutionary mass action. Writing in retrospect, Roy observed in his *Memoirs*, "The quintessence of the situation, as I analysed and understood it, was a potentially revolutionary movement restrained by a reactionary ideology."<sup>15</sup>

Roy found nothing revolutionary in the Non-cooperation movement launched by Gandhi. According to him, it was essentially a middle class movement, and so he advocated a militant mass action in place of Gandhi's non-cooperation. He felt that the Congress which continuously enjoyed the patronage of the capitalists, could never mobilise the support of the workers and peasants for any kind of meaningful mass action. Gandhi's doctrine of class harmony, his theory that "workers should not look upon their employers as exploiters, but trust them as their elder brothers",<sup>16</sup> his religious ideology and trusteeship were all at once welcomed by the capitalists and landlords.

Roy believed that Gandhi was an obstruction in the path of social progress because he was essentially a Hindu revivalist, who was eager to maintain the values of "subservience, submission and self-abnegation already enshrined in Hinduism."<sup>17</sup> Again, in his outlook and approach, Gandhi appeared to be authoritarian and antidemocratic, and his fast, according to Roy, was nothing but a kind of moral coercion. He looked upon Gandhi as a prisoner of Hindu traditions "which for centuries had completely fettered the

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 207

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>M N Roy's *Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 543.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 544

<sup>17</sup>John Patrick Hartcock, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, op. cit., pp. 254-55.

Indian mind in the name of spirituality."<sup>44</sup> Instead of trying to liberate man from the age-old irrationalities of the caste system and religious superstition, Gandhi was encouraging him to accept traditional observances. Roy was quite vehement in his attack on Gandhi and Tilak, who frequently used the idiom and language of religion to appeal to the masses. He had no admiration for India's Hindu heritage, for he looked down upon Hinduism as an ideology of social slavery.<sup>45</sup>

Roy was furious at Gandhi when the latter suspended the Non-cooperation movement. Without knowing the revolutionary potential of Gandhi's programme, he deplored the action and he thought that the suspension came at a time when it had the possibility of becoming a full scale mass revolution. "The Congress had committed suicide", Roy commented, "by repudiating the revolutionary action of its followers. A powerful revolutionary movement had been sacrificed on the alter of Gandhism."<sup>46</sup> In his *Manifesto To The All India Congress Committee*, dated 15 July 1922, Roy wrote that the Congress resolutions adopted at Ahmedabad, Bardoli and Delhi "were the signs of decline, degeneration and betrayal" ... "and particularly the suspension of civil disobedience ordered from Bardoli, was a veritable betrayal of the revolutionary rank and file by the non-revolutionary and reactionary leadership."<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the Twenties, Roy was most unsparing in his criticism of Gandhi, and in a number of articles and pamphlets, published during this period, he tried to project certain glaring defects and contradictions of Gandhism. The most serious limitation of Gandhism, according to Roy, was the absence of any clear programme of economic reform. Besides, instead of recognising the need for class struggle, Gandhi's stress on social harmony, was equally a grave error. The metaphysical aspect of his political thinking together with the obscurantist and reactionary view of history was

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 254-55.

<sup>46</sup>M N Roy and Evelyn Roy, *One Year of Non-Cooperation From Ahmedabad to Gaya*, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

<sup>47</sup>M N Roy, *Manifesto To the All India Congress Committee*, 15 July 1922, in G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the C P I. (1917-1922)*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 468.

also pointed out as another serious drawback of Gandhism.<sup>43</sup> The essence of the movement for national liberation, Roy asserted, was to be found in economic and social emancipation and certainly not in religion or metaphysics. What surprised Roy most, was the complete absence of any revolutionary zeal in the Gandhian approach to social change. Instead, one could only notice, Roy complained, a "weak and watery reformism which shrinks at every turn from the realities of the struggle for freedom."<sup>44</sup>

Roy looked upon Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence with a sense of contempt and continued to maintain that only those who did not want a revolution in India alone could pin their hopes on non-violent methods. What Roy advocated during this period was a violent overthrow of the social order by sharpening class conflicts at all levels. He firmly believed that political freedom and economic emancipation could never be attained under the leadership of Gandhi. Without realising the significant point that the nationalist movement in India was essentially dependent on the leadership of Gandhi, Roy went to the extent of calling for his replacement.

There was, however, a slight relapse in Roy's attitude to Gandhi soon after the suspension of Non-cooperation movement. Recognising his tremendous popularity and hold over the masses, Roy acknowledged Gandhi's unique capacity to awaken the masses for political action. There he even compared Gandhi with "St. Thomas Aquinas, Savonarola and St. Francis of Assissi."<sup>45</sup>

Yet he continued with his virulent attack on what he called the negative features of Gandhism. This found expression in his "Prison Diaries" which he wrote during the five year period of his imprisonment from 1931 to 1936. His critique, as presented in an essay entitled "India's Message", began with a contemptuous repudiation of Gandhism. Roy then, characteristically pronounced his judgement on it as "a mass of platitudes and hopeless self contradictions", emerging from "a conception of morality based upon dogmatic faith."<sup>46</sup> Instead of calling it a philosophy, Roy

<sup>43</sup> Dennis Dalton, *Gandhi and Roy—The Interaction of Ideologies in India*, in Subbarayan Ray (ed.), *Gandhi, India and the World*, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>44</sup> M N Roy and Evelyn Roy, *One Year of Non Cooperation From Ahmedabad to Gaya*, op. cit., pp. 56-58.

<sup>45</sup> Sankar Ghose, *Socialism and Communism in India* (Calcutta, Allied Publishers, 1971), p. 150.

<sup>46</sup> M N Roy, *India's Message: Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary*, vol. 2 (Calcutta, Renaissance Publishers Ltd., 1950), pp. 210-11.

preferred to describe Gandhism as a religion politicized in order to serve "the ideological reflex" of India's "cultural backwardness and superstition."<sup>52</sup> In fact Roy went on analysing the ethics of Gaddhi just only to refute all its moral virtues which he had idealised throughout his life.

Roy repeatedly stated that Gandhism was only the message of medievalism and as such it had nothing to offer for the advancement of Indian society. For the attainment of progress and civilization, Roy asserted, that one should look towards the West which represented the free play of the forces of "rationalism, technology and modern science."<sup>53</sup> This assumption of Roy was again in sharp contrast with that of Gandhi.

There was, however, a perceptible change in Roy's attitude to Gandhi and the Congress immediately after his release from prison in 1936. In that conciliatory mood, he was rather inclined to co-operate with both and his writings during this period reflected a spirit of compromise. However, his desire to influence the Congress policies and to enhance his position, power and prestige within that organization, compelled him to be in search of new groups and alliances. Roy did not succeed even in this desperate attempt mainly because of his inability to adjust himself with the nationalist leaders or with the nationalist sentiments which the Congress then represented. Without knowing that nationalist India was not interested in him, Roy jumped into the Congress politics, just only to be finally alienated from the political mainstream. As years passed on, it was fairly evident that Roy became a suspect in the eyes of both the Congressmen as well as the communists.

#### DIFFERING ASSESSMENT

As stated earlier, Nehru had all along an entirely different assessment of Gandhi and much of Roy's criticism was, therefore,

<sup>52</sup> Roy wrote in his Diary: "Gandhism is the ideological reflect of this social background. It sways the mass mind, not as a moral philosophy, but as a religion. ... The masses pay their homage to a Mahatma—a source of revealed wisdom and agency of super-natural power. The social basis of Gandhism is cultural backwardness, its intellectual mainstay, superstition" *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>53</sup> Dennis Dalton, "Gandhi and Roy", in Sibnarayan Ray (ed.), *Gandhi, India and the World*, op. cit., pp. 152-53.

bound to be unpalatable to him. Despite his own disagreement with Gandhi on numerous occasions, Nehru never denigrated him, nor tried to disown him. He had accepted his political leadership rather unconditionally. Over the years, a conviction had grown in him that national independence must synchronise with social reform and the former could be achieved only under the leadership of Gandhi. To him the very idea of disrupting national unity or dislodging the leadership of Gandhi was preposterous. It was Gandhi, Nehru openly acknowledged, who helped a "subservient demoralized people, incapable of any action and much less united action suddenly develop a backbone and power of resistance and an amazing capacity for united action against the might of a great and entrenched empire."<sup>44</sup> Reacting sharply against the criticism of Roy as well as that of the Communist International Nehru said:

World events of the past decade or more have many lessons to teach us. There is the painful and miserable failure of social democracy in England, Germany and other countries. There is also failure to make good or to rouse the masses, irrespective of suitable economic conditions, of the communist parties of various countries (excluding the Soviet Union). In most countries communism is represented by three or four different groups or parties, each cursing and slandering the other, wholly incapable of united action, and often forgetting the common foe in their mutual bickerings. It is perfectly clear that, however correct the ideology of the Communist International may have been, their tactics have failed.<sup>45</sup>

Roy's criticism of Gandhi, Nehru felt, was most unfair and unjustified. It was true that Gandhi, who was functioning purely in the nationalist plane, never thought in terms of class conflict.

But the main contribution of Gandhiji to India and the Indian masses has been through the powerful movements which he launched through the National Congress. Through

<sup>44</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Winter India* (Allahabad: Katabitan, 1933), pp. 35-40. Also in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974), p. 29.

<sup>45</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, "Further Criticisms Considered", in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6, op. cit., pp. 21-29.

nation wide action he sought to mould the millions,... and changing them from a demoralised, timid, hopeless mass, bullied and crushed by every dominant interest, and incapable of resistance into a people with self-respect and self-reliance, resisting tyranny, and capable of united action and sacrifice for a larger cause."<sup>44</sup>

Nehru was, no doubt, the acclaimed leader of the left group within the Congress. But he never thought of separating the revolutionary from the reformist elements—a task in which Roy engaged himself so unsuccessfully for many years. Unlike Roy, Nehru had identified himself completely with the Congress politics and culture, and at no stage of his long political career, he was guided by the desire for a new political organization. Again unlike Roy, he was determined to fight all his battle of ideas within the Congress itself and succeeded, to some extent, to push it to the level of his own political orientation. Further Nehru had never adopted a sectarian approach in his fight for national liberation. From the beginning he had realized the historically progressive character of the Indian middle class—a fact which was seldom recognized by M.N. Roy.

One of the basic differences between Nehru and Roy was that while the former readily recognized the fact that in contemporary Asia, nationalism was capable of generating necessary mass enthusiasm, the latter did not subscribe to it. Nehru had, no doubt, a better and more realistic assessment of the Indian situation and perhaps that enabled him to accelerate the process of his own political development in a short span of time. Roy, on the contrary, with all his atheism, distrust of the peasantry and alienation from Indian culture, could not bridge the gulf between himself and the forces of nationalism.

Nehru and Roy had fundamental differences with respect to the role of the Congress, in the struggle for independence. Despite his frank admission of its essentially bourgeois character, Nehru considered the Congress to be the only potential instrument of mass action. He, therefore, sought to enlist the cooperation of all segments, to strengthen that organization. Roy, on the other, hand

<sup>44</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), p. 34.

wanted to throw the national bourgeoisie out of bounds of the revolutionary masses, so as to enable the struggle to eventually develop into a class war. "The movement for national liberation", Roy categorically stated, "will take place on the basis of the struggle between the exploiting and exploited classes. Henceforth the fight for national freedom in India, becomes a class struggle approximating to the final stage."<sup>12</sup>

### Critical Comment on Nehru's Radicalism

Roy saw, in 1928, the process of radicalization of the Congress politics. The initiative for a radical programme of action, however, came from Nehru, whose political resolution on complete independence, at Madras session, created a stir among a section of the nationalists. Though Roy considered that resolution as a favourable sign, its adoption was described as "a mere stage show". What irritated him most was Nehru's inability to utter a "single word" about the means to attain the goal of 'complete independence'. The resolution, according to Roy, was mainly intended to please the petty-bourgeois elements within the Congress and thereby to prevent them from moving "towards revolutionary alliance with the masses."<sup>13</sup> Roy also found, during this period, a continuing process of class differentiation in the nationalistic ranks leading to radicalization of the movement. The petty-bourgeoisie was now outgrowing the leadership of the big bourgeoisie—was the interesting comment of Roy on the activities of Nehru, Subhas Bose, Srikrishna Iyenger and the Independence of India League. He was also equally critical of their socialist programme. However he predicted that the left nationalists would eventually ally themselves with the big bourgeoisie or "develop into a social democratic party."<sup>14</sup>

### Roy's SUPPORT TO NEHRU'S PROGRAMME

When Roy returned to India on 17 December 1930, the Civil

<sup>12</sup>M.N. Roy, *Future of Indian Politics*, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>13</sup>M.N. Roy, "Imperialism and Indian Nationalism", *Interlocutor*, 3 (1928), pp. 1-3, quoted in John Patrick Hartnett, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, op. cit. p. 90.

<sup>14</sup>John Patrick Hartnett, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, op. cit., p. 166.

Disobedience Movement was on a decline. Many Congressmen were on the look out for a more effective means of action to carry on their struggle for freedom. By that time Roy's principal agents in India—Tayab Shaik, Brajesh Singh, Sunder Kabadi and Dr. Anadi Baduri—had done enough preparatory work for Roy to go ahead with his political programme. They had also given a wide publicity to Roy's proposal for a Constituent Assembly for India, and collected the signature of as many as one hundred active members of the Congress and the Nationalist Youth League, in its favour. Roy's demand for a Constituent Assembly, had a tremendous appeal to many in the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru himself was in favour of it. "Constituent Assembly", Roy declared, "is the central slogan of the democratic revolution, which is on the order of the day."<sup>43</sup>

Immediately after his return, Roy got in touch with most of the political leaders. He spent a couple of months in the United Provinces, which was then in ferment because of the peasant agitations. He had, earlier accompanied Nehru on a tour of villages in that province and found that the peasant movement was developing quite rapidly there. He felt extremely happy with the development because "the broadening of the base of the Congress Party, its development into a semi-legal organization, and the radicalization of its lower echelons had been his declared aim since he returned to India."<sup>44</sup> Roy thought that rural India was virtually in revolt because of the world wide fall in prices of agricultural products and the time was opportune for the left-wing Congressmen to capture the leadership of the movement by supporting the demands of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie.

Ironically, the interests of Roy and the left-wing nationalists coincided on this issue. Both were eager to strengthen their base in the organization with the support of the peasantry. Meanwhile, in pursuance of this programme, the United Province Provincial Congress Committee had launched a 'no-rent' campaign under the leadership of Nehru in December 1931, in five districts. From the beginning Roy had actively supported this movement and provided all encouragement to Nehru even to resort to direct action. It should be noted that "Roy was one of the guiding forces behind

<sup>43</sup>M.N. Roy, *Our Problems* (Calcutta: Basendra Library, n.d.), p. 138.

<sup>44</sup>John Patrick Hartcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, op. cit., p. 195.

the 'Central Peasants League', an organization which worked closely with the Congress Party and whose efforts met with considerable success in various parts of the province."<sup>42</sup> But Roy's suggestion during this period that the workers' agitation for minimum economic demands should be linked up with the national struggle for freedom—was not liked by Gandhi and his followers. They were at that time exploring the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the problem with the British Government. The result was the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, which provoked both Roy and Nehru, though the latter finally accepted it under persuasion.

Roy and Nehru had almost identical views on the future of the Congress Socialist Party. In a series of three letters addressed to Congress Socialist Party in 1934 and 1935, Roy argued that the formation of a separate socialist party within the Congress, would eventually lead to the isolation of the left-wing from the Congress leadership. It will also reduce their importance as well as effectiveness and they might ultimately be forced to leave the Congress.<sup>43</sup>

To Roy, the immediate political objective was national independence, and to achieve it, he wanted the left wing to offer an alternative to the Gandhian programme of national revolution. The left wing should concentrate on this point, rather than trying to divide the organization into socialists and non-socialists. He was also opposed to the Congress Socialist Party sponsored resolutions on confiscation of property without compensation and collectivisation of land. He warned the Socialists to realize that the majority in the Congress, at that stage, was not prepared to accept socialism. Instead of grouping the Congressmen into Socialists and non-Socialists, Roy argued, it would be better to effect a division between militant nationalists on the one hand and those who wanted to work within the framework of the Constitution of 1935, on the other. The Congress Socialist Party later did realize the validity of Roy's criticism, and in the annual conference of the party held in Meerut in 1936, a resolution was adopted, stating that the party's immedi-

<sup>42</sup>V. B. Karnik, *M.N. Roy—Political Biography* (Bombay: Nav Jagriti Samaj, 1978), p. 344.

<sup>43</sup>M. N. Roy, *Letters by M. N. Roy to the Congress Socialist Party* (Bombay: Renaissance Publishers, 1937), pp. 4, 52, 29. (This is a collection of three letters dated May 1934, May 1935 and February 1936) quoted in John Patrick Hartnett, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, op. cit., pp. 246-47.

ate task was not to convert the Congress into a Socialist Party but into a multi-class anti-imperialist front.<sup>44</sup>

It might be recalled that Nehru was critical of the socialists on many accounts and that he refused to join the Congress Socialist Party when it was formed. Both Roy and Nehru believed that the Congress Socialist Party was moving on a disastrous course and that its political future was rather bleak. Their prediction came true in 1939, when a constitutional subcommittee of the Congress recommended to AICC, that the Party Constitution be amended to disallow membership to groups or parties opposed to the Congress policies. Subsequently, upon the attainment of independence, the constitution of the party was amended to that effect and the socialists had to quit their parent organization.

#### NEHRU AND ROY AT THE KARACHI SESSION

At the invitation of Nehru, Roy attended the Karachi session of the Congress in the guise of Dr. Mahmud from United Provinces.<sup>45</sup> The Karachi session was mainly to consider the Gandhi-Irwin Pact which had created some controversies among a section of the nationalist ranks. There was widespread feeling that Gandhi did compromise his position while accepting its terms. As stated above both Roy and Nehru were quite unhappy about the Pact.

Roy had, however, no illusion about the final outcome of the session which was convened essentially to endorse the agreement. His aim was mainly to encourage the radical elements in the Congress and support their voice of dissent against Gandhi. In other words he was out to exploit the prevailing discontent within the nationalist ranks.

In the debates that followed the Subject-Committee's resolution calling for the endorsement of the Pact, Roy proposed an amendment on behalf of a well organized leftwing group. His amendment described the Pact as "a betrayal of India by the bourgeoisie", and pointed out that it was utterly inconsistent with the independence resolution, passed by the Lahore session of the Congress.<sup>46</sup> But the

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 249-50.

<sup>45</sup>D B Karuk, "M N. Roy: My First Encounter", *The Radical Humanist* (Calcutta) vol. 25, no. 24, March 1972 pp. 6-9.

<sup>46</sup>*The Times* (London), 30 March 1931, p. 12.

amendment was ruled out of order and the Pact was finally approved. For Roy, Karachi session was an eye-opener in the sense that he found Gandhi as popular as ever and that the voice of opposition carried no weight at all. Roy, however felt sadly disappointed by a sudden change in the attitude of Nehru who was known for his open criticism of the Pact. But Gandhi was able to persuade him to move the resolution endorsing the Pact in the open session despite the fact that he was initially reluctant to do so.

The Karachi session was significant in another respect. A resolution on Fundamental Rights and the National Economic Programme was adopted, committing the Congress Party for the first time to a policy of socio-economic reform.<sup>47</sup> The adoption of this resolution, which was the subject of heated discussion, however, provoked a controversy later. Since it was a clear departure from the general policy of not taking up vital economic issues, in the open session of the Congress, there arose some speculation about its authorship. Those who knew of the presence of Roy at Karachi and were aware of the long discussions Nehru had with him, believed that the draft was originally prepared by Roy although it was later recast by Nehru in consultation with Gandhi.<sup>48</sup> This speculation which appeared widely in the contemporary press, was stoutly denied by Nehru, who later described it in his autobiography as government inspired "tales of mystery and imagination." He, however, stated that "he had to make several drafts", and the final resolution was prepared by him in consultation with Gandhi.<sup>49</sup>

Roy himself was not at all happy with the Karachi resolution as it finally emerged, and he described it as an "instrument of deception."<sup>50</sup> He accused the Congress leadership of raising false hopes among left wing Congressmen while its real intention was to avoid the path of revolution. "The left-wing of the Congress" Roy com-

<sup>47</sup>For the text of the Resolution see Paitabi Sitaramaya, *The History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1935)*, vol. 1, Congress Working Committee Publication on the Occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Congress, pp. 779-82.

<sup>48</sup>D.B. Karuk, "M.N. Roy, My first Encounter" *The Radical Humanist*, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

<sup>49</sup>D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Life of the Mahatma* (Narayanand Gandhi, vol. 3 (Bombay Vithal Bhau K. Bhavani, D.G. Tendulkar, 1952), p. 111.

<sup>50</sup>"M.N. Roy, "Whither Congress", A Manifesto dated 15 April 1934, *M.N. Roy Papers*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, File No. JL/6, 32, p. 4

mented, "was greatly enthused. In that groundless enthusiasm, the reformist deviation on the vital issue of the anti-imperialist struggle was not noticed".<sup>11</sup> The resolution simply reflected the confused and vague thinking of the Congress on vital issues. It may be noted that both Nehru and Roy, in the beginning, were in favour of a more radical orientation of the Congress policy. But the former, under pressure from the rightwing ultimately yielded and the resolution was considerably watered down. This had made Roy a critic of Nehru and the Karachi resolution.

M.N. Roy was arrested in Bombay on 21 July 1931 on a warrant pending against him in the Kanpur Communist Conspiracy Case and remained a prisoner till 20 November 1936. His arrest and detention evoked widespread sympathy for him and many nationalist leaders including Nehru joined his defence committee. In one of his touching references to Roy, Nehru wrote at that time:

And so he wastes away and his bright young life, which has already shown such rich promise, slides down hill to the brink. Such is the fate of one of the bravest and ablest of India's sons of the present generation... it is a tragedy to see the waste of the lives of those who have the ability and capacity to do so much for their country, while others whom nobody can accuse of possessing any intellect or ideals or even decent feelings occupy the seats of power and authority.<sup>12</sup>

During the short period of seven months, when Roy was free prior to his arrest, he had politically activated himself and there were many tangible achievements to his credit. He had initiated steps to strengthen the leftwing elements in the Congress. The 'Labour Subcommittee' of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee and the 'Independence of India League' were the products of his brain work. Roy's activities on the Trade Union front were no less significant. In cooperation with the nationalists, he successfully managed to keep official communists out of the All India

<sup>11</sup>Ibid

<sup>12</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Manabendranath Roy", Young Socialist League Pamphlet, no. 4, Poona (no date) also in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6, op. cit., p. 144.

Trade Union Congress. In fact his was an effort to reunite the trade union movement by building up representative trade unions.<sup>72</sup>

### **ROY'S PRENDICAMENT IN THE CONGRESS**

When Roy was released from prison on 20 November 1936, there was a perceptible change in his political approach. His attitude to the Congress was one of willing cooperation and he was no longer interested in pressing for a radical socialist programme. He was ready to cooperate with all in the interests of national and organizational unity. In his message to the Indian people—Roy asked them to:

rally in millions under the flag of the National Congress as a determined army fighting for democratic freedom.. Socialism or communism,...is not the issue of the day. Real socialist or communists must realise that if they wish to play a part in the struggle for freedom of the Indian masses, National independence is the immediate objective...The National Congress is our common platform.<sup>73</sup>

He, therefore appealed to every section of the nationalists to rally behind the Congress and put up a united fight for freedom.

This statement of Roy, though created a furor among the leftists, was generally welcomed by the rank and file of the nationalists. Consequently at the Political Conference in Bareilly Roy was formally enrolled as a Congress member and elected as a delegate to the annual party conference to be held at Faizpur.<sup>74</sup> In fact the Bareilly conference passed a special resolution welcoming him to the Congress. Later, Nehru, in his presidential address in the

<sup>72</sup>V.B. Karanik, *M N Roy: Political Biography*, op. cit. p. 350.

<sup>73</sup>M.N. Roy, *On Stepping out of Jail* (Bombay, n.d.), M.N. Roy Important Publications, *M.N. Roy Papers*, Serial No. 4, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p. 1.

"In fact Roy had expressed his desire to formally join the Congress. He said: "I have not been formally connected with the Congress. But all these years I worked for the strengthening of the Congress by seeking to radicalise and democratise it. And henceforward, to facilitate my work I shall get myself formally enrolled as a member of the Congress." *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

Faizpur session, referred to Roy as a veteran soldier in India's struggle for freedom.

Roy, in the meantime, issued another statement clarifying his position and political objective which was to "strengthen the National Congress as the organ of an effective struggle against Imperialism. I shall endeavour to unite and strengthen those elements in the Congress which have already realized that National Freedom is but a necessary stage on the road to a greater freedom."<sup>78</sup> What he actually proposed to do was to prepare a concrete plan of action for a democratic revolution by uniting the anti-imperialist forces and raising the level of mass political consciousness. As a first important step in this direction, Roy sought to democratise the Congress organization by making the local party units more and more influential. "The Congress organisation and leadership must be democratised, brought under the influence of the rank and file, I shall work for that purpose."<sup>79</sup>

Keeping this objective in view, Roy held a series of meetings, in Bombay, with a number of Congress leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Acharya Kripalani. But the Congress leaders were not very responsive to Roy's programme, as they wanted to have a cautious approach. In fact the right wing leaders had some mental reservation about Roy whose political credibility was never accepted beyond doubt. While addressing a group of Congressmen, Roy himself commented on his peculiar position in the Congress and said: "lately I have painfully found a feeling of distrust and suspicion about me on the part of some people."<sup>80</sup>

Understandably Gandhi also did not want to encourage his long time critic. When Roy's speech at Madras was brought to his notice, Gandhi at once wrote to Nehru, "As I have already told you I find it difficult to understand him (Roy)."<sup>81</sup> Gandhi had not forgotten the virulent campaign which Roy had unleashed against him in mid-twenties. A specimen of his bitter criticism contained in one of his letters to Gandhi was published in *Young India* in 1925. Roy wrote in that letter,

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid* pp. 4-6.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid*, p. 6

<sup>80</sup>Address by Roy to the Madras D.C.C., 27 July 1937, *Independent India* (Bombay), 19 August 1937, p. 12.

<sup>81</sup>Gandhi to Nehru, Wardha, 30 July 1937 in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters* (Bombay Asia Publishing House, 1958), p. 238.

The Mahatma proposes to 'touch the masses through their hearts, their better nature'. It is a fascinating proposition, to which Bolshevism would not object, had it been found workable in the practice of liberating the masses from class domination and imperialist oppression. His theory of 'discipline' is also very questionable. It may be good for the spiritual well-being of the masses, but it certainly weakens their will to fight for freedom. All these doctrines about 'heart', 'better nature', 'discipline', and the like have been adumbrated by those who were the instruments of class domination. Bolshevism... challenges the existence of God and denounces all codes of religion and ethics, because in the struggle for freedom they are all found arrayed on the side of despotism, tyranny and oppression.<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly the socialists watched this development with utter dismay and suspicion, while the communists started a mounting attack on his drift towards the right. Roy, thus, found himself in a predicament. One section in the Congress treated him as a dangerous communist intriguer, while another looked upon him as a traitor to the cause of communism.

#### THE CLASH ON THE AFFILIATION OF THE KISAN SABHA WITH THE COMMUNISTS

The Socialists and communists in India had been quite active among the vast peasantry during the mid thirties, and the former, in fact, took lead in organizing the All India Kisan Sabha in January 1936. Their idea at that time was to make the Kisan Sabha, a powerful class organization, so as to provide a strong political base for them.

The Congress leadership then, had no clear thinking on developing the Kisan organizations into a class force, although it wanted to enlist the support of the Kisans individually just to broaden the organizational structure of the Congress. The strategy of the leftists, on the other hand, was to seek the collective affilia-

<sup>10</sup>M. N. Roy to Gandhi *Young India*, 1 January 1925 reproduced in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol 25 (Delhi Government of India, Publications Division, 1967), p. 607.

tion of Kisan Sabhas with the Congress, hoping that it might give them an additional support base within the party. Nehru, who was the spokesman of this strategy, used to advocate the collective affiliation of workers and peasants with the Congress Party. In the Lucknow session of the Congress, he openly supported the resolution of the socialists to that effect. Though the resolution was defeated, the issue, however, became a bone of contention between Nehru and M.N. Roy.

Roy stoutly opposed the idea of collective affiliation on the ground that such class organisations were likely to function as rival bodies within the Congress and might weaken the nationalist movement. He said:

These organizations will be independent of the Congress. I do not visualise a new united front organ developing out of the joint working of the National Congress, the Trade Union Congress, the Kisan Congress, etc. What I visualise is the transformation of the Congress itself into that united front organ by the effective participation of the workers, peasants and other oppressed masses.<sup>11</sup>

Instead of collective affiliation, Roy wanted to strengthen the primary Congress committees with the cooperation and support of the local peasantry. His suggestion was that the Primary Congress committees should make the Congress a large peasants' organization.<sup>12</sup> Roy had earlier discussed the question of widening the social base of the Congress with Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Bhulabhai Desai and subsequently sent his recommendations to the Working Committee for amending the party constitution. However he continued to oppose the idea of collective affiliation of the trade unions and peasant organizations.

Nehru and Roy clashed again at the Faizpur session of the Congress when the socialists with the support of Nehru moved a resolution on the same issue. But the resolution was rejected, and instead, the Congress adopted a mass contact programme under which the Provincial Congress Committees were asked to form primary committees in all villages and wards. The Working

<sup>11</sup>M N Roy, *On Stepping Out of Jail*, M. N. Roy important publications, M N Roy Papers, Serial No 4, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>12</sup>V B Karan, M. N. Roy—Political Biography, op. cit., p. 419.

Committee was also authorised to appoint an Organizing Secretary to give effect to the mass contact programme. But, when Roy offered himself for the new post, he was discouraged by both Gandhi and Nehru, who advised him to give up active politics and better devote himself to writing.<sup>43</sup>

It should be noted that the Congress resolution on mass contact programme had not incorporated all that Roy recommended on the issue. But he was quite happy to see the Congress moving in that direction. However his earlier observation that independent class organizations like Kisan Sabhas were likely to function as rivals to the Congress, later came true. Nehru, who had all along championed the cause of collective affiliation, himself became very unhappy about the way in which independent Kisan Sabhas were then functioning. He deprecated the tendency of the Sabhas to treat their red flag as a rival to the national flag.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately in February 1938, the Congress resorted to an extreme step, in its Haripura session, by adopting a resolution which prohibited Congressmen from associating themselves with Kisan Sabhas.

Roy's differences with Nehru and other nationalist leaders were still widening rather than disappearing, as time passed on. In 1939 when Subhas Bose founded his new party-Forward Bloc, there arose a mild controversy between Nehru and Roy. Nehru believed that the new party was formed under the influence of Roy because its policies were at variance with those of the Congress, and as such it marked the beginning of a complete break with the past. Refuting this allegation, Roy categorically stated, that the Forward Bloc came into existence without his knowledge and that he never tried to influence its policies. Roy was, however, furious at Nehru for rejecting all his proposals for democratisation of the Congress even without caring to took into their merits. His obsession with the Gandhian techniques, Roy said, had rendered Nehru incapable of seeing good in any other programme of political action. That Nehru was the principal defender of Gandhism formed the central point, in all his critical remarks on Nehru during this period. His views on the reactionary

<sup>43</sup>John Patrick Hartcock, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, op. cit., pp 265-66

<sup>44</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *Eighteen Months in India* (Allahabad: Kirtabistan, 1938), pp. 213-17

character of Gandhi and the Congress leadership also remained unchanged.

### Roy's INDICTMENT OF NEHRU

Nehru and Roy worked in association with the Congress for about three years since the latter was released from prison in 1936. Before that, between his first meeting with Roy in Moscow in 1927 and second at Allahabad on the eve of the Karachi session, Nehru had practically no contact with Roy. But during the years Roy had written a lot, condemning the politics of Nehru, who, by his own confession, felt hurt on many occasions.<sup>11</sup>

Roy presented his critical estimate of Nehru in a small booklet entitled '*Jawaharlal Nehru*', which he wrote in 1945 when he was still a communist. He was so sharp and often uncharitable in his criticism that he had no mind to spare him practically on any point of consideration. Nehru's inner contradictions, his attitude towards the war and the August offer of Lord Linlithgow, his rejection of Cripps proposal and acceptance of Wavell Plan, composition and character of his interim government and above all his Socialism—were all brought in for a through scrutiny, that the whole exercise rather appeared to be nothing but an open indictment of Nehru.

Roy first focussed his attention on certain apparently contradictory approaches of Nehru to some of the contemporary political problems. With an eloquent testimony of facts, Roy questioned Nehru's stand on the issue of Congress participation in the 1937 election to the Provincial legislative assemblies under the Act of 1935. The Act itself was described by Nehru as a "charter of slavery". But subsequently he not only welcomed the decision of the Congress to fight the election but also vigorously campaigned for its election victory.

After the election there arose a controversy over the question of office acceptance. Nehru, who was then the President of the organization, opposed the formation of provincial ministries. His

<sup>11</sup> *Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1956), p. 268. Also 'Official Repression' article published in *The Bombay Chronicle*, 17 October 1933, in S. Gopal (ed.) *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 6, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

draft resolution to that effect, was however not acceptable to the Working Committee, and Nehru, at that stage, even threatened to resign. In fact a final decision on the question had to be deferred on several occasions because of the opposition of Nehru and the Socialists.<sup>66</sup> The deadlock was however resolved with the intervention of Gandhi who "prevailed upon the Committee to accept the original draft, amended by a short paragraph which invalidated the rest of the resolution."<sup>67</sup> Nehru then moved the amended resolution for acceptance and the Congress thus accepted office under the "charter of slavery". This, according to Roy, was a clear betrayal.

Much of Roy's criticism of Nehru, was based on his belief that the latter often failed to act upon his own convictions and was ever ready for compromises. This, he pointed out could be attributed to a conflict of two cultures in Nehru. The medieval tradition represented by Gandhi exerted too much pressure on him that it often clashed with his apparently modern ideas and outlooks. Roy's interesting remark was that the Indian nationalist movement was being guided "at the same time by two men belonging to two epochs of cultural history, personifying two patterns of culture."<sup>68</sup> While recognizing many admirable attributes of Nehru's personality, Roy commented that what raised him "to the high pedestal of the 'Tribune of the People' and subsequently to political power", was not those meritorious qualities, but "his mystic and mysterious relations with Gandhi."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup>The subject came up for consideration in the Working Committee meeting in August 1935 and later at the Lucknow and Faizpur, Congress sessions. In his presidential address at Faizpur, Nehru said "the only logical consequence of the Congress policy is to have nothing to do with the office and the ministry. Any deviation from this would mean a reversal of that policy." See Patalubhu Saramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress (1935-47)*, vol. 2 (Bombay, Padma Publications, 1947), p. 34.

<sup>67</sup>Later the AICC resolution of 1937 permitting the acceptance of office came as a shock to the socialists. Jayaprakash Narayan's amendment to the main resolution was defeated and the main resolution on office acceptance was carried by 127-10 votes. See P. L. Lakhapal, *History of the Congress Socialist Party* (Lahore National Publishers and Stationers (India) Ltd., 1946), pp. 55-58.

<sup>68</sup>"M N Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru—An Enigma or a Tragedy?" in A. B. Shaw (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Critical Tribute* (Bombay, Manaktolas, 1965), pp. 33-41.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 39

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

## ON INDIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WAR

Roy was again critical of Nehru for the latter's contradictory stand on the question of India's participation in the British war efforts. Though the Congress itself was initially divided on the question, some leaders like Nehru had viewed the war, essentially as a conflict between the forces of democracy and fascism, and therefore wanted to offer assistance to the British war efforts on condition that freedom and democracy would be granted to India soon after the war. This view was endorsed by the AICC by a resolution adopted on 10 October 1939. Since no favourable response was forthcoming from the Government, the Working Committee, later decided not to cooperate with the British in their war efforts. It also, at the same time, called upon all Congress ministries to resign.

Roy had taken an entirely opposite position on the issue. He pleaded with the "Indian democrats and socialists", for "India's voluntary, unconditional and purposeful participation in the war. . . ."<sup>10</sup> He also demanded even the postponement of the national struggle until the end of the war. Roy and his supporters, in fact, organized a number of anti-fascist mass meetings throughout the country in support of their demand. Roy's main attack was directed on Nehru for his contradictory approach. Earlier, according to Roy, Nehru had declared "that it was necessary in India's interest, and the world's to prevent the victory of Axis Powers, yet he had the individual civil disobedience against the war, rejected the Cripps's offer, justified the sabotage campaign of 1942 and so forth."<sup>11</sup> Roy argued that democracy and freedom would not have been of much value for India, if fascism was to emerge victorious in the war. Nehru took strong objection to Roy's propaganda which, according to him, not only amounted to an act of gross indiscipline, "but an invitation to revolt against the Congress and to organize anti-Congress elements for the purpose." "Under cover of fighting fascism", Nehru pointed out, "it is an attempt to help British imperialism at a moment when that imperi-

<sup>10</sup> M.N. Roy, *Jawaharlal Nehru* (Delhi: Radical Democratic Party, 1945), p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> Phillip Spratt, "Roy and Nehru", in A.B. Shaw (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Critical Tribute*, op. cit., p. 43.

alism is determined to crush Indian nationalism and our movement for freedom."<sup>11</sup> Roy was also accused by the Congress leaders of United Province of committing an act of indiscipline and it eventually led to his expulsion from the primary membership of the Congress party for a period of one year.

Roy was quite bitter against Nehru, when the latter accepted the Wavell Plan. Nehru had all along maintained that "politics thought in terms of religious communities is inconsistent with democracy,"<sup>12</sup> and the Congress would never indulge in communal politics. Yet he did not hesitate to argue that the interim government to be established under the Wavell Plan, was a definite advance towards the goal of complete national independence. In other words, Nehru was ready to ignore that part of the Wavell Plan which treated India, not as a homogeneous nation but as composed of so many religious communities.

Roy, on the other hand, wanted the Cripps' proposal to be accepted, for it offered much more than the Wavell plan. A mere addition of two or three Indians, he argued, as members of the Executive Council, was nothing, as long as the Viceroy retained his veto power and the Executive remained without responsibility to the legislature. According to Roy, Nehru was a party to the rejection of the Cripps' proposal, because "he did not share the conviction that the victory of the Axis Powers would be as much of a calamity for India as for the rest of the world. Lacking that conviction, he would not take the responsibility of mobilising the Indian people to make the maximum contribution to the war."<sup>13</sup> Cripps' proposal was rejected by Nehru on the ground that it offered only 'limited power'. But even with the possession of limited power, Roy argued, democratic, intelligent and foresighted men could certainly promote the cause of freedom.

Roy appeared to be rather unfair to Nehru when he attacked him for accepting the leadership of Gandhi. Gandhi, from the beginning, had introduced a dose of religion into politics, which Roy always regarded as a medieval practice. For Nehru and many

<sup>11</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru to M N Roy, Allahabad, 23 September 1940, in S Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 11 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), pp. 237-38.

<sup>12</sup>Philip Spratt, "Roy and Nehru", in A B Shaw (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Critical Tribute*, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>13</sup>M N Roy, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., p. 6.

others, Gandhi was the only ideal leader. But, "by accepting Gandhi," Roy observed, "as the best of all possible leaders of nationalist India, Nehru endorses the medieval practice of introducing religion into politics."<sup>\*\*</sup>

Roy had no appreciation for Nehru's affectionate regards for Gandhi, nor his modern, scientific outlook. He regarded him as an unwitting tool of Gandhi and a popularity hunting demagogue, who readily served the reactionary purpose of the Congress by rationalising the obscurantism of Gandhi.

This was undoubtedly an unwarranted criticism. The difficulty with Roy was that he completely misjudged certain important aspects of Nehru's political career. As an intellectual in politics, his radicalism was necessarily conditioned by certain practical considerations. That there was no future for anyone who broke with the Mahatma, and that political victory lay, not in being rigid but in being flexible enough to compromise, was a settled conviction of Nehru.

#### BITTER COMMENT ON NEHRU'S SOCIALISM

Roy's comment on Nehru's socialist ideas was equally sharp and bitter. "His fascination for socialism", wrote Roy, "was the expression of the longing of the loquacious intellectual of the twentieth century for an ideal."<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Far from having a sense of open commitment, Roy believed, that Nehru had only an 'emotional longing' for socialism. In fact, his socialist ideas remained absolutely vague throughout and he had no precise thinking of the right means of social re-construction. That vague and confused thinking of socialism, according to Roy, could only prevent him from leading the movement towards the higher goal of a social revolution. Had the mass movement generated under the banner of nationalism been well articulated, the social revolutionary spirit of the masses would have seriously threatened the prevailing social order. But, instead of providing that revolutionary impulse, Roy complained, Nehru's nationalism preferred "to deceive and

<sup>\*\*</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>M N Roy, Jawaharlal Nehru—An Enigma or a Tragedy", in A B Shah (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Critical Tribute*, op. cit., p. 38.

mislead the politically inarticulate urge for social justice."<sup>17</sup> By mixing up nationalism and vaguely conceived socialist ideas, Nehru had merely confused the issues. He was also accused of making an attempt to rationalise conservative nationalism as the means to social revolution.

Without any clarity of thought or qualm of conscience, Nehru continued to preach socialism which could only help to stagnate and arrest the development of the progressive forces in the country. His socialist idea found its application first in his demand for the nationalization of land. This, according to Roy, was a progressive demand. But the Congress refused to accept it. This should have convinced Nehru of the true character of that organization, "Instead of seeing the obvious", Roy pointed out, "Nehru vulgarised socialism by identifying it with nationalization of land, which can be associated with economic systems based on private ownership."<sup>18</sup> Again Nehru appeared to have ignored a fundamental principle that socialism was applicable only to a highly developed capitalist society where land was not the principal means of production. Roy argued that mere nationalization of land within the capitalist system did not mean socialism for the reason that the private ownership of the means of capitalist production was not abolished thereby. Roy, therefore, concluded that either Nehru was not aware of these implications of his propaganda in the context of the Indian situation,<sup>19</sup> or he was not sincere to what he preached.

Roy interpreted Nehru's "progressive socialism" as a "synthetic ideology of National Socialism."<sup>20</sup> Conceding that nationalist Nehru had a revolutionary programme for an un-compromising anti-imperialist struggle, Roy pointed out his failure to organize a sustained national struggle for social revolution. Roy found this apparent default of Nehru in the intellectual conviction and cultural ideals which he had nourished over a period in the European liberal tradition.

Roy's assessment of Nehru's socialism was purely from a Marxist point of view. Being a supreme pragmatist, he was never bothered about the ideological niceties or philosophical interpreta-

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 37-38

<sup>18</sup>M N Roy, *Jawaharlal Nehru et al.*, p. 40

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30

tions of socialism. In his anxiety to promote equality and social justice, he developed the idea of socialism as a distant goal. In his scheme of things, there was absolutely no room for class war or a violent overthrow of the existing order. "In considering these economic aspects of our problems", Nehru emphasised, "we have always to remember the basic approach of peaceful means. . . ."<sup>101</sup> Nehru's commitment was, therefore, not to any rigid ideology, but to the doctrine of golden mean which stressed the need to avoid the extremes. His eagerness to avoid the apparent shortcomings of both liberalism and scientific socialism on the one hand, and his rationalism and humanism on the other, together contributed to the development of his socialist ideas. Contrary to that Roy held the Marxist view that capitalism and communism were the two incompatible opposites where there was absolutely no room for any compromise.

#### ON INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC POLICY

In Nehru's concept of socialism, state planning was an essential ingredient. It was his firm belief that, for rapid progress of the country some measure of state control and direction was inevitable in the field of economic planning. Roy, who was strongly opposed to this idea, maintained that "there will be absolutely no socialism in such planned economy. Nehru shares the wrong notion that planned economy is socialist economy."<sup>102</sup>

Nehru's idea of state planning had been fairly well incorporated in "The Report of the National Planning Committee" of which he was one of the architects.<sup>103</sup> He, however, declared at that time, that a National Government was a political pre-requisite for his economic programme. But he did not utter a single word anywhere about the social composition of the National Government

<sup>101</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Basic Approach—A Note" published in AICC Economic Review (New Delhi), 15 August 1958, in *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches September 1957—April 1963*, vol. 4 (Delhi: Publication Division, 1964), p. 123.

<sup>102</sup> M.N. Roy, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>103</sup> A note prepared by Nehru and circulated to the members of the National Planning Committee on 4 June 1939, contained his idea of state planning. See S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976), pp. 375–80.

which would translate his socialism into reality. This was a significant omission according to Roy who, therefore, sought to throw some light on it.

Roy was a bitter critic of the Nehru Government formed under the leadership of Nehru. Its composition and character were such as would only confirm his earlier apprehension. The Congress Working Committee, with the approval of Nehru, "invited the representatives of industrial and financial interests to join the new Executive Council," and the list included Sir Ardeshir Dalal, a director of Tatas and an author of the Bombay Plan.<sup>124</sup> This, according to Roy, was to protect the interests of big business as well as "to prepare the ground for an alliance between imperialism and national capitalism."<sup>125</sup>

Subsequently Nehru set up a "Planning Board" the composition of which revealed that Roy's allegation was not altogether incorrect. The Board consisted of representatives of many vested interests, and the Government's industrial policy, framed on its advice was in accordance with the policy of the Bombay Plan. Thus the economic policy of the first National Government, Roy argued, was directed and controlled by the big business. Roy's purpose was mainly to expose Nehru's contradictory approach to his own professed socialism.

Regardless of the merit of the criticism, the point is that despite Nehru's earnest effort to give a new direction to India's economic development, he failed to ensure a non-capitalist path of development. It might have helped, to some extent, to prevent the growth of monopoly capitalism, but in no way, advanced the cause of socialism. Nehru was mistaken in his thinking that state planning and public enterprise in the key sectors of the economy, would eventually bring in an alternative structure to capitalism. However, in the larger context of the nationalist movement Nehru, unlike Roy, was able to play the game of politics quite successfully.

<sup>124</sup> M. N. Roy, *Isms behind Nehru*, op. cit., pp. 18-19.  
<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

## *CHAPTER SIX*

# **Nehru and the Indian Communists**

The Indian nationalist movement, in its early stage, until the First World War, was not a well organized mass movement. It was mainly confined to a relatively small segment of the community, comprising the upper class landlords and other wealthier elements who were somewhat loyal to the alien rulers and posed no serious challenge to them. The peasants and workers who remained almost totally unorganized, had not yet awakened. The Congress itself—extremists and moderates together—constituted only a small group of intellectuals. It remained an elite organization. Though extremism demonstrated a more uncompromising attitude of the dispossessed intellectuals to the British rule, it evoked little sympathy at the mass level. The constitutionalism of the moderates too had failed to build up any meaningful mass action, though it well served the purpose of the bourgeoisie.

It was in this political background that Gandhi emerged on the scene with all his novel experiments and forms of political action. Gandhi, no doubt gave a fillip to the struggle and for the first time the nationalist agitation became a mass movement. Gandhi preached a philosophy of class harmony and class collaboration and opposed any appeal to particular class interest. The political dynamism of Gandhi himself for sometime was not properly understood by many. His reluctance to define precisely the goal of the nationalist movement also added to the confusion. Under his leadership, the Congress became a viable and effective nationalist organization; but it was not without rivals or without a certain vulnerability to political ideologies antagonistic to its own. Though the Congress had worked among the weak and the oppressed, it had not made any serious effort to develop class organizations. In other words, the field was open to those who had different political orientations to concentrate on those hitherto unorganized sections of the society. The political and social environment in India around the year 1920, thus provided both openings and obstacles to the growth of communist movement.

## COMMUNIST INFLUENCE ON THE NATIONAL CONGRESS

The First World War was followed by certain sweeping changes in many parts of the world. The most outstanding development was the emergence of socialism as a significant political force in the Soviet Union. Though socialist ideas had their echo in India even earlier, "it was the October Revolution in Russia and the establishment of the first working class state in the world which transformed socialism from what had been regarded as a utopian dream into a living reality."<sup>1</sup> The impact of socialist ideas was widely felt in India in the sense that it was also during the postwar period that the Indian working class began to emerge as a significant political force attracting the attention of many young nationalist leaders. There was a kind of mass awakening in this period in the form of mass demonstrations, strikes, hartals and struggles, and the spreading mass unrest appeared to have shaken the foundations of British imperialism in India. The central significance of the period, however, was that a large number of revolutionaries joined the Indian National Congress and actively participated in the non-cooperation movement. In Bengal many communists held key positions in the district and provincial Congress committees. But most of them were thoroughly disillusioned in 1922 when Gandhi suspended the movement. Though the suspension of the movement no doubt created a temporary setback to mass political activities, it stimulated a great debate on Gandhi's leadership and the efficacy of Gandhian techniques in winning the war of independence. These discussions helped to form an intellectual climate conducive to the spread of new theories and new ideas.

Meanwhile many Indian revolutionaries had already established contact with M.N. Roy, a communist in exile in Europe through Nalini Gupta and Muzaffar Ahmad. With his active help and assistance they did a lot of propaganda in favour of revolutionary socialism by disseminating Bolshevik literature. Many nationalists like C.R. Das and Subhas Chandra Bose had "some contact with Bolshevik revolutionaries in those days."<sup>2</sup> But among those Congressmen who had established direct contact with the communists

<sup>1</sup>K. Damodaran, *Indian Thought. A Critical Survey* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1967), p. 449.

<sup>2</sup>B.B. Mitra, *The Indian Political Parties—A Historical Analysis of Political Behaviour upto 1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 203.

and became an active member of the *Communist Centre*<sup>3</sup> at Benaras was Dr. Sampurnanand. On 16 October 1922, Sampurnanand published a memorandum on the Congress political programme, which he had originally prepared to present to the Gaya Session of the Congress. The memorandum was highly critical of Gandhi and his non-violent method of action, and contained an open call for complete independence. Sampurnanand later established contact with Nehru, who was then in charge of Congress Volunteer Movement. In his reply of 25 April 1923, to a communication received from Sampurnanand, Nehru expressed his appreciation for Sampurnanand's suggestions for the radicalisation of Congress policies. Nehru, in fact, correctly observed at that time that "Communism in India had not progressed much beyond the stage of an intellectual exercise."<sup>4</sup> The close contact between the two leaders, though not fruitful for any significant communist movement, was quite helpful for the radicalisation of the Congress politics. Later Nehru also showed some evidence of being influenced by the developments in Soviet Union and its inevitable impact on Indian politics.

Communist influence on the Congress became noticeable during the trial of Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case in 1924 when the Comintern's policy, as revealed by documentary proof, stressed the need for the formation of a Communist Party of India. Leaflets widely circulated among the delegates of the Balgaum Session of the Congress in the same year, on behalf of the Communist Party of India, emphasised the importance of organizing what it called a Revolutionary Nationalist Party designed to achieve complete national independence "with a social and economic policy based on the public control of agriculture and industry as well as freedom of education and religious worship."<sup>5</sup> Although finally the Communist Party was formed in December, 1925, its impact was only marginal, at that time, on the national liberation movement. However it functioned for many years in the periphery of the Indian National Congress and tried to influence the left elements within that organization. The party's main tactical line at that stage was to work its way up through the Congress and finally to capture

<sup>3</sup>This Centre was established by Shaikat Usman.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in B B Misra, *The Indian Political Parties—A Historical Analysis of Political Behaviour upto 1947*, op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

the leadership casting the national bourgeoisie from the centre of the stage. Though the party did not succeed in its objective, it did some useful work on the trade union, students and youth fronts. It also tried to organize the peasantry in the rural areas.

### RADICALISATION OF CONGRESS POLITICS

Most of the early communists were the radical nationalists who possessed somewhat "vague and abstract ideas of Socialism and Marxism."<sup>1</sup> Their effort in the beginning was to radicalise the Congress party and the Gandhian movement, but ultimately they had to reconcile to the fact that Gandhi was in full command of the Congress organization and was the most decisive factor in determining its strategy and tactics. However for many years, with a view to radicalise the Congress policies, the communists functioned with several other individuals and groups within the Congress. They seized every single opportunity to propagate that a "vague nationalism which sought to combine the interests of all classes, such as of labour and capital and of the peasant and landlord was a delusion and asserted, that a true socialist movement could not combine the interests of all classes."<sup>2</sup> Rejecting the liberal democratic theory, the communists stressed the need to organize the workers, peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie into a true revolutionary force for the national liberation and social transformation. Despite the fact that these ideas evoked some sympathy in a few individuals like Nehru, the Congress as an organized body showed little inclination in that direction. As a matter of fact even Nehru and his followers were to remain contented with some radical resolutions and not with any meaningful mass action.

With the arrival of the two British communists—Philip Spratt and Ben Bradley, the ideological orientation of the early Indian communists began to assume a more precise Marxist formulations.<sup>3</sup> These two leaders "helped the communists in India to integrate

<sup>1</sup>K. Damodaran, "Marxism and India: The Past", *Seminar* (Delhi), June 1974, p. 17

<sup>2</sup>Santosh Ghose, *Socialism and Communism in India* (Calcutta: Allied Publishers, 1971), p. 17

<sup>3</sup>Besides Ben Bradley and Philip Spratt, there were others like Gladding and Charles Ashby.

Marxist thought with the situation that was developing, and with the problems and tasks of the anti-imperialist movement and of the organization of the working people.<sup>10</sup> Besides, the Indian communists, from the beginning, were under the influence of the ideas of Lenin and the strategy and tactics adopted by the Communist International under his leadership. It was from these sources then they realised the political and social significance of Indian nationalism and that the nationalist struggle, as part of the world wide anti-imperialist movement, was essentially meant to achieve Socialism and the emancipation of the working class.

Keeping this ultimate objective in view, the communists, though a very small group, persistently sought to radicalise the nationalist movement through revolutionary ideas and militant actions. Their sharp criticism of the moderate leadership of the Congress<sup>11</sup> was well received by the progressive section. While supporting the movement, they rallied the leftist elements inside the Congress. Marxist ideas were also propagated by publishing a large number of journals and leaflets in different languages.<sup>12</sup> They also championed the cause of the exploited masses particularly the working class.

The spread of socialist ideas, in a sense, gave a new orientation and added a new element of strength to the anti-imperialist movement in the country. Communists called for the overthrow of feudalism and for a mass struggle for complete independence. They vehemently opposed the Congress demand for Dominion Status. They also attacked the vacillating and compromising attitude of the Congress leadership.

Thus the growth of intellectual communism and its appeal to a section of the nationalists on the one hand, and the failure of the non-cooperation movement followed by the crisis in the Congress on the other, created a new political situation in India. It was, in fact, a period of "national upheaval". The mass of people were involved in a great struggle which called for a profound under-

<sup>10</sup>K. Damodaran, "Marxism and India. The Past", *Satyam*, op. cit., p. 17

<sup>11</sup>M.N. Roy's *India in Transition and What Do We Want?* and S. A. Dange's *Gandhi Vs. Lenin* were the products of communist criticism of the Congress leadership.

<sup>12</sup>Indu Prakash in Marathi, S. A. Dange's *Socialist* in English, Navayug in Tamil were all propagating communist ideas during 1922-25.

standing of the socio-economic forces in the country. The nationalist movement could not go on, for long on the basis of any medieval thinking. The impotent constitutionalism of the moderates or the antiquated religious ideology had no appeal to any one. The working class, by that time had become an organized force exerting pressure on the course and content of the political struggle. About the new orientation of the labour movement and the new challenge to the existing institutions, Jawaharlal Nehru observed:

The organized labour movement, especially in Bombay, and to a lesser extent in Calcutta, was also socialistic in a loose kind of way. . . . Vague communistic and socialistic ideas had spread among the intelligentsia. . . . Everywhere there was in evidence, a new spirit of enquiry, a questioning and a challenge to existing institutions. A clear and definite ideology was lacking. Nationalism still was the dominant thought.<sup>12</sup>

The peasants too had entered the national struggle in a big way. There was some kind of an unrest everywhere.

### RISE OF INDIAN COMMUNISM

Inspired by Marxist ideas on the one hand and disillusioned by the Gandhian methods of struggle on the other, the more militant among the fighters for freedom, formed small communist groups during 1923 in the industrial cities like Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Kaspur and Lahore. S.A. Dange, S.V. Ghate, Muzaffar Ahmad, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Sugara Velu Chettiar and Shaklatwala were the pioneers of the communist movement in India. An all India conference of these small groups was held in Cawnpore at the initiative of *Satyabhastra* in December 1925 and a Communist Party of India was formed. Its social base was of middle class and leadership was in the hands of intellectuals. "The C.P.I's mind was then the mind of the Indian middle class intellectuals."<sup>13</sup> Thus

<sup>12</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1952), p. 364.

<sup>13</sup>Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Communism as Indian Politics* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 12.

P.C. Joshi could claim later that: "Indian communism is born out of the Indian national movement itself. The founders of our party were the workers of the 1919-1920 movement either in the Congress or the Khilafat or from earlier terrorist groups."<sup>14</sup>

The Congress Party, the student community and the urban proletariat were the three fronts on which the Party directed its activities. But due to severe repressive policies of the British Government and also because of internal conflicts, the Party could not effectively function for many years. From the Peshawar Conspiracy Case of 1923, in which the Scotland Yard and Indian C.I.D. collaborated, to the Kanpur Conspiracy Case of 1924 and to the famous Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1929, a chain of prosecutions was launched against the communists. However Workers and Peasants Parties and Youth Organizations were formed in different provinces and communists and Congressmen actively collaborated with them. A good deal of journalistic activities were also initiated for spreading the ideology by the various communist groups scattered all over the country. In 1922-23 a Marathi paper called *Indu Prakash* and in English, *Socialist* under the editorship of S.A. Dange were published in Bombay, also *Navajug* from Madras, *Dhumketu* and *Atma Shakti* from Bengal also were in circulation. *Ganavani* was published by Muzaffar Ahmed and *Inqilab* by Gulam Hussain from Lahore. *Masses of India*, published from Berlin was also smuggled in for propaganda.<sup>15</sup>

It was also during this period that communist groups were formed among the Indian emigrants in Germany and Soviet Union. Prominent among them were M.N. Roy and D. Chattopadhyaya. The former "played an important part in the Second Congress of the Communist International which adopted the resolution on national and colonial questions",<sup>16</sup> while the latter was associated with the League Against Imperialism.

Equally significant was the general attitude of young radicals, in various parts of the country, who, in their disenchanted mood

<sup>14</sup>P.C. Joshi, *Congress and Communists* (Bombay, People's Publishing House, 1944), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>K. Seshadrin, "An Assessment of the Communist Party's Role in the National Movement for Independence and Socialism", in *Proceedings of the Seminar on Socialism in India* (Part I 1919-1939), (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 1970), pp. 394-95.

<sup>16</sup>K. Damodaran, *India's Thoughts—A Critical Survey*, op. cit., p. 450.

with the Gandhian programme, naturally turned "to Marx and Lenin in their search for an alternative party for national emancipation."<sup>17</sup> A section of the growing intellectual class produced by the British system of education also felt disappointed with Gandhian ideology. "While this group did not necessarily wish to cast off all traditional values, it was nourished by Western ideas and ardently desired that India should attain social and economic progress."<sup>18</sup> like any other advanced nation in the world. To some belonging to this group, socialist ideas were quite fascinating because of their radical socio-economic programme and also of the rapid political advancement. In other words for a number of young men and women, socialism was an alternative to Gandhism.<sup>19</sup> In the circumstances, it was natural that Marxist ideology became an attractive theme of the elites of the nationalist movement. Of these, the most important was Jawaharlal Nehru.

### THE IMPACT OF MARXISM ON NEHRU

"The theory and Philosophy of Marxism", wrote Nehru in his autobiography, "lightened up many a dark corner of my mind. History came to have a new meaning for me. . . ."<sup>20</sup> The philosophy of Marxism had a tremendous appeal to Nehru. Its freedom from dogmatism and its most scientific outlook, he believed, were greatly helpful to understand the social phenomena. "While all other systems and theories were groping about in the dark", Nehru said, "Marxism alone explained it (the world crisis) more or less satisfactorily and offered a real solution."<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that Nehru's affinity to the left was partly self-inspired and partly born out of his contacts and experience of 1926-27 when he was away on a trip to Europe. There, as an official delegate of the National

<sup>17</sup>K. Damodaran, "Marxism and India: The Past", *Seminar*, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>18</sup>G D Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), p. 16.

<sup>19</sup>A new political awareness was created by S.A. Dange's pamphlet *Gandhi and Lenin* which appeared in 1921, and in which Lenin's ideas were preferred to those of Gandhi. This was an earnest attempt to interpret the nationalist movement from a Marxist viewpoint.

<sup>20</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 362.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 363.

Congress, he participated in the 'Congress of Oppressed Nationalities', held in Brussels, from 10 to 15 February 1927. He was also elected a member of the Organizing Committee of the League Against Imperialism and later served on its nine-member executive committee. Though the League had attracted a number of non-communist nationalists, many of them were aware of the communist influence on it. "This Congress was, no doubt", observed Nehru, "communist inspired one, and the organization which emerged from its deliberations—The League Against Imperialism—was actually a communist front."<sup>12</sup> Yet his participation enabled him to "understand some of the problems of colonial and dependent countries."<sup>13</sup> It also provided, according to him, "a common platform for the two great movements of revolt against the existing conditions which we have in the world today, the struggle of labour against the entrenched citadel of capital and the nationalist movements in countries under alien domination."<sup>14</sup> The League had made its objective abundantly clear that imperialism was the common enemy to be fought ceaselessly and rooted out before a better order could be established. This was precisely the conviction of Nehru who believed that gradually even national movements like Indian National Congress, conservative in their social outlook, were beginning to look towards the socialist ideal of society.

During his stay in Europe, Nehru had a meeting with Chatopadhyaya and M.N. Roy. The former was one of the General Secretaries of the League while the latter was guiding from abroad the communist movement in India. Recalling his meeting with them, Nehru wrote, "of the few (Indian exiles) I met, the only persons impressed me intellectually, were Chatopadhyaya and M.N. Roy."<sup>15</sup>

#### NEHRU'S ADMIRATION OF SOVIET ACHIEVEMENTS

In November 1927 Nehru along with his father paid a short

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's Forward to P.J. Schmidt's "The Imperialist Danger", in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), p. 352.

<sup>15</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

visit to Moscow at the invitation of the 'Society for Cultural Relations' to foreign countries, to attend the 10th anniversary celebration of the Bolshevik Revolution. The brief four day visit made a deep impression on the younger Nehru. On his return to India, he wrote a series of "random sketches and impressions" and the Indian press gave a wide publicity to that.<sup>24</sup> These writings, however, contained occasional expressions of reservations which were to assume a greater significance in Nehru's estimation of communism in later years. Yet he had great admiration for socialist ideas and Soviet achievements. "Personally", said Nehru, "I am a strong admirer of the general trend of policy in Russia. Soviet Russia today, in spite of heavy blunders and many sins, holds out the bright promise of a better day to the world at large and to the worker specially, more than any other country."<sup>25</sup> Later recalling his visit to Russia, Nehru wrote in his autobiography: "the presence and the example of Soviets was a bright and heartening phenomenon in a dark and dismal world."<sup>26</sup> He was, in fact thrilled by the spectacular achievement of the October Revolution and he felt convinced that "the Soviet Revolution not only advanced the human society by a great leap, but also laid the foundation for a new civilization towards which the world would advance."<sup>27</sup>

It should be noted that Nehru's admiration for the Soviet experiments was not without criticism. Some of the negative aspects of the Soviet policy did create a feeling of resentment in him. "Often I disliked or did not understand some developments there", Nehru remarked, "and it seemed to me too closely concerned with the opportunism of the moment or the power politics of

<sup>24</sup> Soon after his return, Nehru wrote a number of articles and they were published in various newspapers in India. Most of them appeared in the *Hindu* of Madras in April, May, June and July 1928. One on "Education" appeared in *Young India* on 9, 16 and 23 August 1928. These articles were later published in book form in December 1928. See S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), pp. 379-451.

<sup>25</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address at the All India Trade Union Congress, 10th Session, Nagpur, 30 November 1929, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* vol. 4 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 361.

<sup>27</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: The Seagull Press, 1946) pp. 17-18.

the day."<sup>20</sup> In another place, he wrote, "I had been drawn to socialism and communism and Russia had appealed to me. Much in Soviet Russia I dislike—the ruthless suppression of all contrary opinion, the wholesale regimentation, the unnecessary violence (as I thought) in carrying out various policies."<sup>21</sup> Despite all these adverse remarks, Nehru honestly confessed that the communist philosophy of life gave him much comfort and hope. In other words his political perception, no doubt, assumed an altogether new dimension.

### NATIONALISTS' SYMPATHY FOR COMMUNISM

The laudatory comments of Nehru had aroused a certain amount of sympathy for the Soviet Union. Some of the nationalists<sup>22</sup> appeared to feel that communists could well be regarded as useful allies in a common programme against imperialism. In any case they were ready to overlook the latter's attack on the bourgeois nature of the movement.

At the Madras Session of the National Congress, held in December 1927, Nehru emerged as the leader of the radical Congressmen and it was mainly due to his effort that the left wing won a major victory by pushing through a bunch of resolutions on complete independence, war danger and association with the League Against Imperialism. Among the communists who attended the Madras Session and supported Nehru's resolutions were Phillip Spratt, R.S. Nimbkar, K.N. Joglekar and a few others.<sup>23</sup> Since then he virtually plunged into the anti-imperialist struggle giving a new orientation to the whole movement. The general attitude of the left wing Congressmen and that of Nehru in particular was some-what conducive to the growth of communist movement in India. This was evident when the nationalist leaders opposed the "Public Safety Bill" which was introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly in September 1928. This Bill was aimed at curbing the activities of Philip Spratt and Ben Bradley who were then guid-

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 361.

<sup>22</sup>Nationalists like Steinavasa Iyengar, Subhas Bose etc.

<sup>23</sup>G D Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, op. cit., p. 123.

and Peasants Party"<sup>13</sup> in 1928, members of the League were called "fascists", and "counter revolutionaries" and the League itself was characterised as a "bourgeois organization, whose object was to impede the development of an independent mass movement."<sup>14</sup> Workers and Peasants and other Party members were instructed not to join the League nor to accept any office in the Congress although they were to remain in the Congress Party—only for the purpose of exposing its reactionary leadership and splitting of its radical section.

In its subsequent policy statements, the Communist Party of India specifically chose to attack the activities of the left group in the Congress. "The most harmful and dangerous obstacle to the victory of the Indian revolution", according to the communists, "was the agitation carried on by the left elements of the National Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, Bose, Giriwala and others."<sup>15</sup> These leaders were accused of using revolutionary phraseology as a cover for carrying on "bourgeois policy of confusing and disorganising the revolutionary struggle of the masses, and help the Congress to come to an understanding with British imperialism."<sup>16</sup> The part played by "the national reformists", like Nehru in the labour movement, where their attempt was clearly to substitute class collaboration for class struggle, was described as "blackguardly and harmful."

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<sup>13</sup>The inaugural conference of the All India Workers and Peasants Party was held on 21-24 December 1928 in Calcutta. Ten of its sixteen member National Executive were avowed communists.

<sup>14</sup>John Patrick Hartcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 158.

<sup>15</sup>*Indian Communist Party Documents—1930-1936* (Bombay: The Democratic Research Service, 1957), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid*

is the part played by the national reformists in the labour movement in which they try in every possible way to substitute the methods of class collaboration for the method of class struggle....<sup>42</sup>

The communists feared that the left Congressmen might again try to set up a new party or organization like the 'Independence for India League' in order to mobilise the mass of workers. The war on the 'left nationalist reformers' was thus deliberately unleashed just to isolate them from the Workers and Peasantry and to mobilise the latter under the banner of the Communist Party of India.

Being an individualist and a strong believer in personal freedom, Nehru found it difficult to align himself rigidly with any particular ideology. Despite his appreciation, he was conscious of the inherent limitations of both communism and capitalism which were detrimental to freedom and democracy. It should be remembered that Nehru accepted communism only as a distant social ideal but himself had never been an unqualified Marxist. For him, Marxism was "primarily an intellectual impulse based, to a considerable extent, on sympathy."<sup>43</sup> While he was in agreement with the Marxist interpretation of the past, he was not convinced by its diagnosis of the future. Both revolutionary dictatorship and coercive methods in communism were regarded as neither desirable nor inevitable. By temperament he was fundamentally opposed to authoritarianism. He deplored the tendency of a dogmatic approach to Marxism, which is generally found in official communism in Russia and elsewhere. Nehru's outlook and approach was thus marked by a clear demarcation from both 19th century liberalism and 20th century communism. His was essentially an attempt to synthesise the vital elements of liberalism with those of Marxism, and this was perhaps, his most distinctive contribution to the Congress culture and ideology. This, being his basic outlook, Nehru was bound to come into clash with the communists in India.

<sup>42</sup>Draft Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India, Part II, The Fight for Partial Demands of the Revolutionary Movement, Party Document, File No. 3, 1930, C.P.I. Library, Ajay Bhavan, New Delhi, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup>S. Gopal "Formative Ideology of Jawaharlal Nehru", in K.N. Panikkar (ed.) *National and Left Movements in India, op. cit.*, p. 7.

Nehru had his first encounter with the communists at the Brussels Conference. He felt irritated by the manner in which the communists, though in a minority sought to dominate the Executive Committee of the League. In his confidential report to the Congress Working Committee, Nehru expressed his "strongest objection to being led by the nose by the Russians or by anybody else."<sup>65</sup> This clash ultimately led to his expulsion from the League in 1931 and the resolution to that effect passed by the Executive stated, "Jawaharlal Nehru has become traitor to the cause of the emancipation of the people of India from the British imperialist yoke."<sup>66</sup> Later he was condemned by the communists, as one of the most dangerous enemies in the struggle for independence.

### DIFFERENCES ON THE ROLE OF GANDHI

Nehru had serious differences with the communists on many accounts. Their estimate of Gandhi and his strategy and tactics as well as the character of the whole Gandhian movement were the bone of contention between the two. To the communists, the nationalist movement was essentially a bourgeois movement and Gandhi was a reactionary, ready to compromise with the British imperialists. While admitting the fact that it was a bourgeois movement, Nehru stressed the point that in colonial countries, nationalism took precedence over all other ideologies and it should derive its strength from the masses and work for them. But what irritated him most was the communists' attack on Gandhi, whose bona fides he could never doubt, however much he differed from him. The Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, declared Nehru, "had produced a wonderful awakening of the masses, and inspite of its vague bourgeois ideology, it had served a revolutionary purpose."<sup>67</sup> He could never think of leaving this apparent revolutionary force, in the hope of developing a parallel or even a counterforce. That act,

<sup>65</sup>"Jawaharlal Nehru, Confidential report to the Congress Working Committee", S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>66</sup>Quoted in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography (1889-1947)*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>67</sup>"Jawaharlal Nehru, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), p. 107.

Nehru thought, would be an act of mere political adventure. He was firm in his belief that 'further progress, both ideological and in action', must be largely associated with Gandhi and Congress.

But Congress at present meant Gandhiji. What would he do? ..He was a unique personality, and it was impossible to judge him by the usual standards, or even to apply the ordinary canons of logic to him. But because he was a revolutionary at bottom and was pledged to political independence for India, he was bound to play an uncompromising role till that independence was achieved. And in this very process he would...himself advance step by step toward the social goal.<sup>44</sup>

His idea was, therefore, to influence the movement with his socialist ideas from within, and if possible to effect a coordination between the national and labour movement, each influencing the other. It was this practical consideration of the political reality that pushed him towards compromises on crucial occasions.

Throughout the period of his leadership, Gandhi was looked upon by the communists as the leader only of national bourgeoisie. They, therefore, agitated for the development of the working class as an independent class which would act as 'the leader, the hegemon of the national revolution'. Gandhi, in his turn, was fundamentally opposed to Marxism, particularly to its doctrine of class struggle. Thus, the communist criticism of Gandhi was on the basis of their own assessment of the class character of the Gandhian movement. His doctrines, they believed, were all rooted not only in "medievalism or mysticism but also because, in practical politics, they involved innumerable compromises with imperialist, feudal and Indian bourgeois interests."<sup>45</sup> Gandhi, in their eyes, stood in "marked contrast to Marx, Engels and Lenin"—the last being a contemporary of his. "Lenin combined the militant mass movement of the working class with the most advanced ideology, Gandhi combined it with the most reactionary and obscurantist of ideologies that was current in the contemporary world."<sup>46</sup> The

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 107-08.

<sup>45</sup> G. Sardesai, "Gandhi and the C.P.I.", in M. H. Rao (ed.), *The Mahatma—A Marxist Symposium* (Bombay: Peoples Publishing House, 1969), p. 8.

<sup>46</sup>E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Jam* (New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1958), p. 11.

communists believed that the basic ideological tenets of Gandhi were blocking the growth and development of the national-revolutionary force in the country. Again the communists never accept the non-violent non-cooperation of Gandhi as an effective form of action that would strike at the roots of imperialism in India. It was only a pressure tactics to force the authorities to come to terms with the Congress. Gandhi was thus looked upon "as a cool revolutionary who did all he could to prevent the development of our national movement on revolutionary lines."<sup>11</sup>

To this wanton attack on Gandhi Nehru's reaction was both swift and strong. He rejected the communist version that Gandhi was forced to launch the two historic movements in 1921 and 1930 because of mass pressure. On both occasions, Nehru emphatically stated, that it was Gandhi who initiated and forced the pace. It would not have been possible to organize them if he had resisted it in a way. Nehru regretted that the communists should have indulged in all kinds of baseless and 'ill-informed criticisms of a personal nature' particularly against Gandhi.

It is very unfortunate that foolish and ill-informed criticisms of a personal nature are made, because they divert attention from the real issues. To attack Gandhi's bona fides, is to injure oneself and one's own cause, for to the millions of India, he stands as the embodiment of truth. ...<sup>12</sup>

Nehru was absolutely clear about the nature and character of the movement. The nationalist movement in India, was no doubt a bourgeois movement and its main objective was not to change the social order, but to secure political independence. The communists' criticism of this very objective, Nehru conceded, "as not far-reaching enough", was quite understandable. But what infuriated him was the absurdity of the communist propaganda that the Congress leaders betrayed the masses because they did not try to do away with the capitalist system.<sup>13</sup> The Indian National Congress never thought, at that stage, in terms of upsetting the land system or the capitalist system.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 115

<sup>12</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 368

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 366-67

## ON THE ROLE OF THE CONGRESS

The communists, from the beginning, chose the National Congress as an important target of their criticism. Both Comintern and the Communist Party of India, for many years, used to ridicule this organization and its leaders, imputing all kind of motives to them. The Congress was denounced as an organization of Indian bourgeoisie, and working in alliance with princes, landlords and zamindars.<sup>144</sup> They greatly resented the 'notorious manoeuvres' of the Congress, such as localisation of the peasant struggles, sabotaging them, if possible by giving communal colour, refusing to transform them into political struggle and appearing to help them with advice to take up subsidiary industries as a solution to their poverty. As a matter of fact Indian communists never regarded the Congress as an instrument of social change.

Nehru was frank enough to admit that much of their theoretical criticism of the Congress ideology was right and their earlier analysis of the Indian political situation also turned out to be correct. But they were completely wrong, Nehru felt, in their appraisal of the role of the Congress. The communists believed and often propagated that the objective of the Congress was mainly to put pressure on the British in order to extract more and more industrial and commercial concessions in the interests of Indian capitalists and zamindars. The task of the Congress is "to harness the economic and political discontent of the peasantry, the lower middle class and the industrial working class to the chariot of the millowners and financiers of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Calcutta."<sup>145</sup> The Congress Working Committee, according to them, was functioning under the influence of capitalists. The Congress programme of direct action and its sudden withdrawal, were all a calculated move to appease the national bourgeoisie. Congress leaders were all accused of great betrayal of the masses. Communists even questioned the sincerity of the Congress to demand complete independence, for, in their view, the nationalists did not want "the British to go away, as they are required to control and exploit a starving

<sup>144</sup>Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism In India. Unpublished Documents, 1935-45* (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1976), p. 18.

<sup>145</sup>Quoted in Jawaharlal Nehru, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), p. 109.

population, and the Indian middle class do not feel themselves equal to this."<sup>13</sup>

Nehru was rather surprised to find that even 'able communists' failed to make a correct analysis of the Indian political situation; and became victims of false notions of the political development. What led to their failure often was their own inability to make realistic appraisal of the Indian problem. "Their basic error", according to Nehru, "seems to be that they judge the Indian national movement from European labour standards";<sup>14</sup> and their failure to recognise the middle class intellectuals as the most revolutionary force.

### **NEHRU'S VIEW ON THE RECORD OF THE C.P.I.**

In a highly critical tone, Nehru wrote in his *Discovery of India*, about the role of the World Communist Parties, with special reference to the role of the Communist Party of India, in the nationalist movement. The general trend, he pointed out, was that the Communist Parties all over the world were losing contact with the nationalist sentiments of the people and in the process they considerably weakened themselves. "While the Soviet Union" observed Nehru, "was forging new links with national tradition, the Communist Parties of other countries were drifting further away from it." "I cannot speak with much knowledge of what happened elsewhere", he added, "but I know, that in India the communist party is completely divorced from, and is ignorant of the national traditions that fill the minds of the people .."<sup>15</sup> He somehow believed that communism necessarily implied a contempt for the past. For the Indian communists, Nehru sarcastically remarked, "the history of the world began in November 1917 and everything that preceded this was preparatory and leading upto it."<sup>16</sup> What, however, surprised him most was the party's total inability to secure a strong base in India. In a poor country like India, where millions were on the verge of starvation and the general economic structure itself

<sup>13</sup>Ibid

<sup>14</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, op. cit., p. 366.

<sup>15</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid

was cracking up, communism should have had a wider appeal. But unfortunately, the Communist Party of India, far from being in a position to take advantage of such a situation, seemed to have "cut itself off from the springs of national sentiment and speaks in a language which finds no echo in the hearts of the people."<sup>50</sup> The Party remained, all along a small group, with no real roots. One of the reasons for this setback, according to Nehru was that the C.P.I., instead of spreading a scientific knowledge of communism, "concentrated largely on abuse of others."<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps more important than this, according to Nehru, was their failure on the rural front. In their anxiety to organize the industrial proletariat, the communists concentrated heavily on big cities, ignoring the vast peasantry in the countryside. Neither did they try to organize them nor did they establish any meaningful contact with them. They failed to see the reality, Nehru pointed out, that "the problem of today in India is the problem of the peasantry."<sup>52</sup> Unlike the communists, Nehru passionately desired to extend the Congress hold over the peasantry and wanted it to grow into a vast peasant organization.

He chided the communists often for their acceptance of Marxist principles like dogmas. The scientific outlook of Marxism was adopted more as a dogma than as a guide to action. The objective understanding of the Indian situation was often prejudiced by the subjective factors of class hatred.

#### DIFFERENCES ON NON-VIOLENT AND VIOLENT METHODS

Nehru believed, that communism, apart from being a rigid doctrine, ignored certain essential needs of human nature. Its "suppression of individual freedom", and its general contempt for the "moral and spiritual side of life" would deprive the human behaviour of all standards and values.<sup>53</sup> While frankly admitting the need for a classless society, Nehru disagreed with the com-

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>51</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *Mahatma Gandhi op. cit.*, p. 106

<sup>52</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 368.

<sup>53</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Basic Approach", in *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches 1957-1963*, Vol. 4 (Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1964) pp. 116-17

unist methods of realising that goal; because its ideology came to be too closely associated with the cult of violence. "Even if it does not indulge normally in physical violence", he observed, "its language is of violence, its thought is violent, and it does not seek to change by persuasion or peaceful democratic pressures, but by coercion and indeed by destruction and extermination."<sup>44</sup> From the beginning, Nehru had deplored the tendency for violence in politics. It was his firm conviction that the method of violence was wholly "unscientific, unreasonable and uncivilized,"<sup>45</sup> and therefore, he sharply reacted to the communist view that the attitude of the Congress leadership to the question of violence betrayed its counter revolutionary role. According to the communists, "The propaganda of non-violence of Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders of the National Congress is intended to prevent a general national armed insurrection of the toiling masses against British rule. By his own confession in his autobiography, Gandhi took part in the armed suppression of the rising of the Zulu Peasants in South Africa, and assisted the British robbers, in their fight against the German capitalists for the right to exploit colonial peoples. ... And today Gandhi tells the peasants and workers of India, that they have no right to, and must not revolt against their exploiters."<sup>46</sup>

It is interesting to note, that following the suspension of the non-cooperation movement, M.N. Roy wrote a number of articles suggesting the communist attitude to violence. That his stand was so explicit in favour of violence was clear when he wrote in 1922: "But it is altogether erroneous to think that there can be such a thing as a 'nonviolent revolution', no matter how peculiar and abnormal the situation in India may be. The cult of non-violence is inseparable from an anti-revolutionary spirit. . . ."<sup>47</sup> The Comintern message to the annual session of the Congress at Gaya, also contained a similar stress on violence. It said "British rule in India was established by force and is maintained by force, there-

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 117

<sup>46</sup>*Manifesto of the Anti-imperialist Conference of 1934* (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1976), p. 16. Also in Draft Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India, Part II. *The Fight for Partial Demands of the Revolutionary Movement*, op. cit., File No. 3, 1930, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup>*The Advance Guard*, December 1922, quoted in G D. Orentreich, Marshall Windmills, *Communism in India*, op. cit., p. 55.

fore it can and will be overthrown only by a violent revolution...<sup>13</sup> The 'message' pointed out the utter futility to think that independence could be achieved by negotiations or by peaceful means.

It was in this background that Gandhi expressed his views on communists and Bolshevism. He could not reconcile himself to the cult of violence that appeared to be inevitable in the communist philosophy of social reconstruction. In December 1924, Gandhi wrote in *Young India*, "I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study.... But in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me."<sup>14</sup> Gandhi made his position amply clear that he was a crusader and an uncompromising opponent of all violent methods even if they were to 'serve the noblest of causes'. It was his firm conviction that nothing enduring could be built on violence. Thus, Gandhian doctrine of non-violence, stood at poles apart, with the violent approach of the communists. "There is.... really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself."<sup>15</sup>

Nehru, who had broadly accepted the Congress creed of non-violence, was vehemently opposed to the communists' arguments. He was convinced that violence had absolutely no place in the modern world and any attempt to forcible imposition of ideas on any large section of people was bound to be counterproductive. He also believed that wrong means would never lead to right results, and this was not "merely an ethical doctrine but a practical proposition."<sup>16</sup> He therefore deplored the communist tendency to glorify violence.

#### NEHRU'S CRITICISM ON THE LACK OF ETHICAL APPROACH

Nehru's arguments in favour of Peace and Persuasion, tolerance and non-violence, were essentially based on an ethical approach to life and problems. "Some kind of an ethical approach to life", he

<sup>13</sup>The *Advance Guard*, 1 January 1923, p. 3, quoted in *ibid*, p. 56

<sup>14</sup>M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 11 December 1924 in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, August 1924 January 1925 Vol. 25 (New Delhi: Government of India, Publications Division, 1957), p. 424.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>16</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Basic Approach*, op. cit., p. 113

confessed, "has a strong appeal for me to justify it logically."<sup>72</sup> In fact, Gandhi's stress on right means had immensely influenced him. But he found to his dismay that the communist philosophy was wholly lacking in it. At the same time, he frankly admitted that the moral approach was never a static one. It was conditioned by the mental climate of the age as well as "an advancing civilization." Yet he believed that there were certain basic urges in all thinking men; and though they could not be rationally explained, they were of a permanent character in them. "I did not like," Nehru admitted, "the frequent divorce in communist practice, as in others between action and these basic urges or principles."<sup>73</sup>

It should be remembered that Nehru did not give an absolute allegiance to the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence or accepted it for ever. What attracted him more and more was the 'moral and ethical' aspect of the doctrine which provided a sound basis for the 'spiritualisation' of politics, not in the religious sense but in a broader sense.

### **CONDEMNATION OF COMMUNISTS' OPPORTUNISM**

Nehru believed that communist policy in India was essentially opportunist. During the entire period of the Liberation movement, they had neither an independent policy nor a consistent approach to the Indian problem. The only consistent factor was, perhaps, the use of the National Congress as a facade of activities, aimed at the capture of political power, and their success even in this mainly depended upon the concealment of their real objective under a cloak of legitimate agitation. The multi-class character of the Congress was indeed quite helpful to the communists to find their berth in it, but they joined that organization not to defend its policies but to use it as a platform for the gradual development of its own base.

Commenting on this behaviour of the communists in the Congress, Nehru remarked:

There are few, somewhat new to the Congress, who, while apparently agreeing, plan differently. They realize that there

<sup>72</sup>Quoted in K. Damodaran, *Indian Thought A Critical Survey*, op. cit., p. 472.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

can be no national and nationwide movement except through the Congress.... They want, therefore, to utilise the Congress and at the same time to break through in directions which are opposed to Congress policy. The proposed policy is to embed themselves in the Congress and then to undermine its basic creed and methods of action....<sup>74</sup>

The policy statements issued by the Communist Party from time to time, only corroborated Nehru's apprehension about its activities.

For nearly three years (1929-1932), until May 1932, the Indian communists, under Comintern's directive, followed an ultra leftist strategy which manifested in violent opposition to Gandhi and Nehru. The most important document of this period was the "Draft Platform of Action" of the Communist Party of India, which was published in International Press correspondence in December 1930. In accordance with the new programme, the communists denounced the Civil Disobedience Movement as a "counter revolutionary manoeuvre of the reactionary bourgeoisie designed to assist the imperialists by distracting the masses from genuine anti-imperialist struggles".<sup>75</sup> Gandhi and Nehru were condemned as mere tools of imperialism. The Comintern also denounced the Congress socialists as social fascists and as a left manoeuvre of the Congress, and the Indian communists simply repeated these wild accusations. The Roy-Stalin theory that the Congress leaders were more afraid of the revolutionary masses than of imperialism was also propagated. Further, the Indian communists were asked to carry on their work independently of the Congress Party for the violent overthrow of the British rule and the establishment of "a Soviet government" and "for the realisation of the right of national minorities to self determination including separation, abolition of the native states" and the creation of an "Indian Federal Workers and Peasants Soviet Republic."<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup>Quoted in Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India*, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>75</sup>K. Damodaran, "Marxism and India. The Past", *Seminar*, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>76</sup>Draft Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India, Part I. Main Tasks of the Indian Revolution, CPI Library, Ajay Bhavan, New Delhi, File No. 3, 1930, pp. 3-5

This practice of the communists giving their first loyalty to the Soviet Union rather than to their own country was thoroughly criticised by Nehru on various occasions. In fact, it was this policy that led the communists in India to their near complete political isolation at that time. They took no account of the actual situation in India before embarking upon a new policy orientation.

However the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, held in 1935 was a turning point in the history of the communist movement in India. This Congress accepted the Dimitroff thesis of an anti-imperialist united front. In order to translate this policy into action, Dutt and Bradley provided necessary guidelines to the Indian communists. According to them, the immediate task of the communists was "to unite all the forces of the National Congress, trade unions, the peasants organizations and the youth on a common platform in a mighty common front. . . ."<sup>17</sup> In actual practice this new line of the party was not much in conflict with the policy of the Congress Socialist Party or other left elements in the Congress. Thus the building up of an 'anti-Imperialist United Front' was facilitated by the helpful attitude of the Left Congressmen headed by Nehru and the C.S.P. But the strategy did not continue for long, the 'United Front' collapsed during the Second World War.

### NEHRU'S ATTACK ON THE COMMUNISTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SECOND WORLD WAR

The Indian communists once again demonstrated their complete inability to formulate a correct and consistent policy during the Second World War. A careful scrutiny of their ideological formulations during this period reveals that there were many contradictions in their approach. When the war broke out, the Communist Party opposed it as an imperialist war and wanted to paralyse the British war efforts by a nationwide strike and armed insurrection despite their slogan of national independence and national revolution. Both Congress and Congress Socialist leaders were accused of creating a stalemate and denounced the Gandhian struggle "as a

<sup>17</sup>R. P. Dutt and Ben Bradley, *Impressor*, 29 February 1936, quoted in K. Damodaran, "Marxism and India: The Past", *Seminar*, op. cit., p. 18.

sham fight for a compromise with imperialism,"<sup>50</sup> and charged his leadership with 'bankruptcy and hypocrisy'.

In the same tone they said that Nehru's role was "to bark at the communists and to hang revolutionary drapings round the working committee resolutions."<sup>51</sup> In September 1940, in the Bombay meeting of the AICC, the seven communist members clashed with Nehru and others on the main resolution relating to war policy.<sup>52</sup> When they finally voted against the Congress resolution, Nehru, in a fit of fury and anger, demanded that their names be recorded. The Indian press next day gave a wide publicity to the dissenters.<sup>53</sup>

However, when Hitler attacked Soviet Union the communists changed their strategy overnight, the imperialist war became a 'peoples war.' The party then urged upon its followers to support the government's war efforts. In February 1942, at the AITUC session, communists had to face stiff opposition, when they tried to secure official adoption of the 'Peoples war line.' Nehru, who inaugurated the session, severely criticised the communists for their politics of opportunism and declared that patriotic Indians must fight for the freedom of their own country before taking up the cause of any other. The President of the AITUC, V.R. Kalappa, and the veteran labour leader N.M. Joshi also turned hostile, with the result that the party failed to get its new line endorsed.<sup>54</sup> By adopting the "peoples war line", the communists were steadily drifting away from the main current of national life and interestingly Nehru observed:

I am positively of the opinion that the Indian communists have given up all their fundamental principles and do not take into account objective conditions in framing their policies. In raising the slogan of 'people's war' they have merely deceived themselves.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup>"Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>"Bombay AICC and After", *Communist*, (Bombay), vol 2, no 12, October 1940, pp. 1-3.

<sup>52</sup>For the text of the resolution, see N.N. Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, vol. 2 (July-December 1940), (Calcutta: The Annual Register Office), pp. 212-13.

<sup>53</sup>"Bombay AICC and After", *Communist*, op. cit., pp. 1-3.

<sup>54</sup>N.N. Mitra (ed.), *Indian Annual Register*, vol. 1 (January-June 1942), (Calcutta: Annual Register Office), pp. 366-69.

<sup>55</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's Address to Mallowans, 2 November 1945, Delhi, in S.

Later, at a crucial stage, in India's freedom struggle when Gandhi gave his battle cry, in August 1942, with the "Quit India" slogan, the communists denounced it as "misguided and pernicious." Referring to the "Quit India" campaign, P.C. Joshi, general secretary of the Indian Communist Party said:

We Indian communists are trying to convince our fellow patriots that the course of action suggested by Congress leadership does not lead to freedom, but cuts the nation away from freedom's battle and divides progressive forces in Britain and India.<sup>14</sup>

Thus the sudden change in their war policy, opposition to the Quit India movement, support to the war efforts when thousands of Congressmen and socialists were in jail for opposing the war, the characterisation of Subhas Bose as a fascist and the Congress Socialists as 'fifth columnists'—these policies alienated the communists from the mass anti-imperialist movement.<sup>15</sup> At the end of the war, however, they again tried with great difficulty to participate in the mass movement.

### CONFLICTING APPROACHES TO THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM

Since 1940, communists had been trying their best to secure the sympathy and support of the Indian Muslims, to their 'Peoples War' policy. Under its new orientation, the Communist Party of India tried to equate the Congress with the Muslim League as the two significant mass political organizations. The main point in this tactical line was fairly manifest when the party initiated a new "National Unity Campaign" in 1943 under which an appeal was issued for Congress-League collaboration. The party wanted the Congress to recognise the League's right to speak for the Muslim

Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 14 (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1932), p. 541.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma—Life of Mahandas Karamchand Gandhi*, vol. 6 (Bombay: Vitthalbhai K. Javeri and D.G. Tendulkar, 1953), p. 170.

<sup>15</sup>K. Damodaran, "Marxism and India: The Past", *Seminar*, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

community and to make necessary concessions to the League's political demands.

P.C. Joshi, the then General Secretary of the Communist Party of India frankly told Gandhi that the latter's responsibility in this regard was much greater than that of the League which was a minority organization. Stressing the point P.C. Joshi argued:

The Congress is the major party; it has to deliver goods; Gandhiji's responsibility is greater... The Congress is the premier national organization, it is Gandhiji's duty to understand the League demand a right, his responsibility to make it an integral part of the common national demand and thus lay the foundation of the Congress-League agreement. He has to think harder than Jionah Sahib. He has to workout a new platform for the Indian national movement which satisfies the League and leads to Congress-League United Front.<sup>44</sup>

He therefore appealed to Gandhi to consider the point that "Pakistan is as much the inalienable right of the Muslims as 'Swaraj' is the right of us all."<sup>45</sup>

This policy of Communists' open support to the League embittered their relation with the Congress. Of all the leaders, Nehru felt deeply distressed by this development. In his letter to Rajni Palme Dutt, on 12 August 1945, Nehru made an agonising appraisal of the communist policy. He wrote:

You must realize that it pains me to see the gulf that has arisen between the Congress and communists in India. The gulf at present is wide and deep and has all the passions of three years behind it. Politically the fact that has gone most against them and aroused the greatest resentment, is their attitude on the communal question. They have become fullblooded supporters of Jinnah's demands (unspecified and vague as they are) and in the name of Congress League unity they demand a complete surrender by Congress to Jinnah.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup>P.C. Joshi, *They Must Meet Again* (Bombay: Peoples Publishing House, 1944), p. 30.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Nehru to Palme Dutt, Gulmarg, 12 August 1945, quoted in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography (1889-1947)*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 305.

He felt that the communist policy had only worsened the communal problem.

### ON THE NATIONALITY PROBLEM

At about this time, the Communist Party of India came out with its nationality policy. Although it took nearly two years for them to formulate the policy, the Communist Party of India finally adopted in September 1942, a resolution envisaging India as a multinational state and the political aspirations of the divergent nationalities had to be met in Independent India.<sup>12</sup> The resolution recognized the right of every distinct nationality to a sovereign or autonomous state within an Indian federation or Union, with the right to secede if it so desired. "Thus free India of tomorrow would be a federation or Union of autonomous states of the various nationalities such as the Pathans, Western Panjabis (dominantly Muslims), Sikhs, Sindhis, Hindustanis, Rajasthani ... Keralas etc."<sup>13</sup>

But the resolution made it clear that those nationalities which were predominantly Muslim, could secede. On the basis of this nationality policy, the communists openly supported the League's demand for Pakistan. Criticising the attitude of the Congress leaders, Sajjad Zahoor, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India said:

Congressmen generally fail to see that the demand for Muslim self-determination or Pakistan, is a just, progressive and national demand and is the positive expression of the very freedom and democracy for which Congressmen have striven and undergone so much suffering all these years. They do not yet see that by accepting the principle of Pakistan, they would be doing exactly what a democrat should and must do—i.e. affirm the right of everyone to

<sup>12</sup>"Pakistan and National Unity" (Resolution passed by the Enlarged Plenum of the Communist Party of India on 19 September 1942. For the text of the Resolution, see N.K. Krishnan (ed.), *National Unity for the Defence of the Mother-land* (Bombay Peoples Publishing House, 1943), pp. 24-26.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.

be the masters of its own destiny, to mould its future according to its own free will.<sup>11</sup>

This policy of encouragement to Muslim separatism and the nationality policy which revealed the influence of Soviet nationality model, created a commotion in the Congress as well as among the Hindus. It could only confirm their earlier suspicion that the communists were anti-nationalist foreign agents. The truth of the situation, however, was that the Communist Party of India, like the Congress, was also motivated by the desire for national unity and communal harmony even though they had apparently chosen a suicidal path.

The position of the communist Party of India on the communal Problem also on the demand for Pakistan, was in sharp contrast with that of Nehru. He was most unhappy to find the communists drifting away in defiance of the nationalist sentiments. Their support to the communalists came in the wake of their open support to the war effort from 1941. Nehru had all along interpreted the growing Muslim communalism as a reflection of the backwardness of the Muslim masses under feudal leadership. Quite contrary to that, the communists regarded it as a nationality problem arising out of a multinational consciousness. According to them:

The leadership of the national Congress instead of playing into the hands of the imperialist reactionaries by refusing to see the developing multinational pattern of our national unity, has to recognise the just claim of the peoples of these individual nationalities to autonomous state existence within the framework of a free Indian Union, and their right to secession from the Union, if they so desired.<sup>12</sup>

Such an unrealistic view, held by them was greatly resented by many and Nehru's forthright criticism of the communists, in fact, reflected the mounting hostility of almost all Congress leaders. This, naturally led to a lot of anti-communist propaganda for

<sup>11</sup>Sajad Zaheer, *A Case for Congress-League Unity* (Bombay: Peoples Publishing House, 1944), p. 1. (Forward).

<sup>12</sup>G. Adhikari (ed.), *Pakistan and Indian National Unity: The Communist Solution* (Bombay: Peoples Publishing House, 1942), p. 7.

sometime and P.C. Joshi confessed in 1944 that "anti-communist prejudices prevails in a majority of Congressmen."<sup>13</sup>

### THE BREAK BETWEEN THE COMMUNISTS AND THE CONGRESS

The Indian communists, thus, found themselves in a predicament. Their political isolation had almost reached a point of no return. To get out of the muddle, however, P.C. Joshi dramatically made an impassioned plea to Gandhi on whom he showered a heap of praise.

It is the Congress that planted the banner of Indian freedom, it is from Congress leaders that we got our early lesson in patriotism and it is today Congressmen who want to deny us the privilege of fighting shoulder to shoulder with them for the cause they taught us to accept as our main aim in life. To us the Congress is our parent organization, its leaders, our political fathers; its followers, our brothers in arms.<sup>14</sup>

But Joshi's effort did not bear fruit. Gandhi was not convinced by his arguments. "I have read and reread your argument", wrote Gandhi in his reply to Joshi, "Every paragraph offends, for, to me, it lacks reality." Gandhi also took objection to the communists' using the expression 'Peoples War'. He wrote in the same reply:

I suggest the title 'people's war' is highly misleading. It enables the government in India to claim that at least one popular party considers this as peoples war. I suggest too that Russia's limited alliance with the Allied powers cannot by any stretch of imagination convert what was before an imperialistic war against the Nazi combine, into a peoples war.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Quoted in A G Tendulkar, *Never Enjoys A Case Against the Communists* (Bombay BPCC, 1945), p. 24.

<sup>14</sup>P C Joshi, *Congress and Communists* (Bombay Peoples Publishing House, 1944), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Mahatma Gandhi to P C Joshi, 30 July 1944 in *Correspondence Between Mahatma Gandhi and P C Joshi* (Bombay Peoples Publishing House, 1945), p. 18.

Nehru was more vehement in his criticism of the role of the communists during the three years beginning from the Quit India agitation. In his interview to the press on 23 June 1945, he expressed his resentment against them. "Fundamentally, the Indian communist policy", he said, "is not adopted from the standpoint of the country where it functions, but from the stand point of the Russian foreign policy...."<sup>22</sup> Again referring to their political aberration because of their wrong and short-sighted approach to Indian nationalism, Nehru added:

I can understand, and am prepared to excuse the fact that their policy does not fall in line with Indian nationalism. They have a fine party-machine and ardent workers, but they have built up psychological barrier between their party and Indian nationalism. Sometimes it becomes difficult to overcome this barrier.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, the relations between the two parties grew bitter, day by day, and all efforts for a reconciliation were of no use. Immediately after the war, the Congress Working Committee decided to take action against the communists. It appointed a committee with Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Govind Ballabh Pant, as members to investigate the activities of the communists. On the recommendation of this committee, the communists were charged-sheeted on 21 September 1945, but they failed to take up the challenge. Instead the party directed all its members to resign from the Congress. In the meantime the Congress Working Committee formally resolved in December 1945 to remove all the communists from the AICC or any other elective office.<sup>24</sup> Thus the communist's long association with the Congress at last came to an unhappy end.

#### ON THE QUIT KASHMIR MOVEMENT

Realising the gravity of the political situation, the communists, as an organized political group, tried to restore respectability in the

<sup>22</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Interview to the Press, Bombay, 23 June 1945, in S Gopal (ed.) *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 14, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid

<sup>24</sup>N N Mitra (ed.) *Indian Annual Register*, vol. 2 (July-December 1945), *op. cit.*, pp. 102, 112 and 122.

Indian body politic. As a first step in this direction, they accepted the legitimacy of parliamentary institutions for the future political set up and offered to participate in electoral politics. Accordingly the party, along with the Congress and Muslim League, contested the elections, held in 1945 and this was, no doubt, a turning point in the evolution of communism in India.

In March 1946 Rajni Palme Dutt, again personally intervened and tried to bring about a rapprochement between the Congress and the communists. He discussed the problem directly with Gandhi, Nehru and other leaders, who were then known for their open hostility to the communists.

On the basis of Palme Dutt's advice, the communist Party of India issued another policy statement in the same year proposing mass action in all states. It had also joined the "Quit Kashmir" movement, making it as a model for political action in other princely states. The party criticised Nehru for attempting to restrain Sheikh Abdullah and giving him wrong advice. It characterised Nehru's approach as a "terrible tragedy" and asserted that Kashmir could not wait since it was "at war".<sup>19</sup>

### **COMMUNISTS AND NEHRU'S INTERIM GOVERNMENT**

The communists found it difficult to define their attitude when Nehru formed the Interim Government. Soon after its formation, contradictory statements were issued by leading communists who could only make the prevailing confusion worse confounded. G. Adhikari branded the Congress leadership as "apprasers of vested interests instead of as defenders of people's interests" and declared that the Communist Party must organize a countrywide general strike besides building the "revolutionary unity of the Indian people for the final fight for independence and democracy."<sup>20</sup> Another communist leader, Somenath Lahiri, in his capacity as a member of the Constituent Assembly, tabled a draft resolution calling upon the Indian people to stand behind the Interim Government, which enjoyed "the support of the overwhelming majority of

<sup>19</sup>Ramchandra, *Salute to Kashmir* (Bombay, Peoples Publishing House, 1946), pp. 22-23.

<sup>20</sup>G. Adhikari, *Resurgent India at the Crossroads; 1946 in Review* (Bombay, Peoples Publishing House, 1947), pp. 17-18.

our people."<sup>161</sup> Despite such contradictory policy statements, the Communist Party of India maintained the attitude of a loyal opposition to the interim government.

Again the communists were not too happy when the Nehru Government accepted the Mountbatten Plan. While the Russians denounced it as a betrayal of the nationalist cause and criticised Nehru for accepting it, the Communist Party of India regarded it as a step forward and pledged its support to the Government.<sup>162</sup> However in its policy statement of June 1947, the Party made a clear distinction between the left wing progressive forces and the right wing reactionary elements in the Congress. Since the former headed by Nehru was in command of the political situation, it called upon the masses to rally behind him and assist him to get rid of Patel whom the party regarded as the leader of the reactionary group. Only with the active help and assistance of the radical, progressive forces, the party believed that the Congress could march along with the anti-imperialist programme. The Communist Party of India, therefore, decided to join all anti-imperialist forces and celebrate 15 August as a day of national rejoicing. It openly praised Nehru as the one man who had "kept the traditions of the national movement alive", and hoped that he would strive to lead India "on the road to socialism and prosperity."<sup>163</sup> The Party also appealed to all progressive Congressmen to rally behind the Prime Minister.

Ironically, "nobody", said B.T. Ranadive, "saw the enormity of the reformist deviation of supporting the Nehru government."<sup>164</sup> However it was the problem of communal riots, as he explained later, that persuaded all of them to support Nehru. The party continued to praise Nehru until December, called him, "the voice of the people", and even suggested a "joint front from Pandit Nehru to Socialists and Communists."<sup>165</sup> But this was only a temporary truce.

<sup>161</sup>The text of the resolution is given in *Declaration of Independence* (Bombay Peoples Publishing House, 8 December 1946), pp. 5-10.

<sup>162</sup>"Statement of Policy", Communist Party of India, *Peoples Age* (Bombay), 29 June 1947, pp. 6-7.

<sup>163</sup>*People's Age*, 9 November 1947, p. 3.

<sup>164</sup>B.T. Ranadive, *ibid.*, Supplement VI, 21 March 1948, p. 4.

<sup>165</sup>*ibid.*, 12 October 1947, p. 5 and 19 October 1947, p. 1.

In December 1947, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India reversed its policy, in accordance with the 'Zhadnov' interpretation of the international situation, and declared war on Nehru government and the National Congress. Later the Second Congress of the Communist Party of India held in Calcutta, on 28 February 1948, characterised the State as a semi-colonial one. British domination, the party stated, had not ended although the form of domination had undergone a change. The task of the Communist Party was, therefore, to organize a "Peoples Democratic Front"—an alliance of the working class, peasantry and the middle class in order to launch the final struggle to win real freedom and democracy. The Central Committee of the party also condemned the draft constitution of India prepared by the Constituent Assembly. Nehru government, was described as the main agent of Anglo-American imperialism in South-East Asia and the Socialist Party as agents of the reactionary national bourgeoisie.<sup>128</sup>

Alarmed at this development, the government immediately took steps to deal with the communists firmly and to put down their violent activities. The party thus suffered a severe blow and setback, as it had already alienated public sympathy to a considerable extent. Its failure to organize an independent anti-imperialist struggle based on a realistic appraisal of the Indian situation was largely responsible for the slackening process of the communist movement. Further, Indian communists failed, in their attempt to capture the leadership of the nationalist movement, because it could not probably recognize the dynamism of Gandhi or the anti-imperialist role of a section of the Indian bourgeoisie. Realising this weak spot in their strategy, S.G. Sandesai later wrote, "our failure fully to grasp Gandhi's role, lay in our broader failure fully to grasp the role of the Indian national bourgeoisie itself in the freedom movement."<sup>129</sup> The attack on Gandhi and Nehru who were virtually in command of the struggle, could help only the party's own alienation from the political mainstream.

Despite all their criticisms, the communists had great regards for Nehru. They supported him quite often particularly after 1930.

<sup>128</sup>M R. Masani, *Communist Party of India* (London: Derek-Verfchoyle, 1954), p. 95

<sup>129</sup>S G Sandesai, "Gandhi and the CPI", in M B Rao (ed.), *The Mahatma—A Marxist Symposium*, op. cit., p. 10

Their regard for him was quite apparent when Nehru openly took an anti-fascist stand during the rise of Hitler and Mussolini. The communists appreciated Nehru's viewpoint on the Spanish civil war and the attack on Abyssinia and the Japanese attack on China. Even in 1942 when they severely criticised Subhas Chandra Bose and the Socialists, their attitude towards Nehru was soft and considerate. But the communists, characterisation of the nationalist movement, its spearheading forces, the National Congress and its supreme leader Gandhi, remained throughout, more in confusion than in a clarity of understanding.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Conclusion

In the preceding pages, the political ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru and those of his critics are analysed in the larger context of the Indian nationalist movement from 1923 to 1947. Nehru and, his critics—Gandhi, Subhas Bose, M.N. Roy and the communists—had divergent perceptions and so they naturally viewed the movement with altogether different perspectives. While some regarded it as a mere political movement for freedom, others wanted to link it to the socio-economic questions. Still a few others sought to give a new direction to the movement with the objective of bringing about a complete revolutionary change in the social structure of India. Nehru who was one among them understood the character and content of the Indian struggle in a much better perspective than most of his critics. From the beginning, Nehru refused to consider the movement as a mere political movement for freedom. His attempt was to link it to the socio-economic question of the whole society. In other words, his effort was mainly to introduce a socio-economic content to the very concept of 'Swaraj', and it naturally provoked many individuals and groups, in the Congress, to criticise him. The challenge of the critics, however, further strengthened Nehru's determination to play a more decisive role in the struggle and it, no doubt, produced a profound impact on Indian political thinking.

Nehru was aware that Indian nationalism, though mainly rooted in the universal virtues of 'pacifism, liberalism and rationalism', was not free from limitations. According to him, Indian nationalism did lack certain vital elements although it was free from violence and hatred. His intense nationalism, coupled with his urge for effective political action, made him a constructive critic of the Indian National Congress. What he demanded was the introduction of a secular, rational and scientific, international outlook as the essential ingredients of Indian nationalism. In other words, he was the most vocal critic of a religious, metaphysical and revivalist

outlook which, according to him, was greatly harmful to the cause.

In the early phase of his political activities, Nehru began to discover the real India in terms of the vast rural oppressed masses. The sympathy that he developed for them brought about a gradual shift in his political thinking. It made him conscious of the weakness of the nationalist movement as it remained almost cut off from the masses. His idea, therefore, was to broaden the mass base of the movement by enlisting the active support of the peasantry, the working class and the youth. Though not wholly identified with the masses, his constant contact with them made him vocal for the demand of social justice.

Unlike most of his critics, Nehru was the first to realise that the Indian nationalist movement was part of a worldwide movement against imperialism, and its oppression and exploitation and it would naturally produce its echo in other countries. He pointedly drew the attention of the Congress to the naked manner in which the British Government steadily pursued their policy of terrible economic exploitation, of divide and rule, of keeping the feudal princes in power, of supporting the rich landlords and of promoting an unholy alliance with the Indian capitalist class. He, therefore, made a fervent appeal to all progressive forces to lend their support for the just struggle of the Indian people. It was in this background that Nehru insisted on the Congress joining the League Against Imperialism, without wholly committing itself to all its programmes.

Being a multi-class organization, the Indian National Congress represented several conflicting and varied interests. However, there were quite a few in it who could think far beyond their surroundings. They stood for drastic socio-economic transformation and were quite enthusiastic about it. This group was actually fighting an ideological battle within the Congress with the sole aim of persuading others to accept its view point. Nehru was, no doubt, the principal spokesman of this group. He was clear in his mind that the destruction of imperialism must pave the way for the construction of a new society on an altogether new basis. In other words, his national ideal was the establishment of a 'Cooperative Socialist Commonwealth' and his international ideal, a 'World Federation of socialist states'. His mind was, therefore, set for the intensification of the struggle against the alien rulers on the one hand and against

*the social reactionaries on the other. Here his outlook and approach seemed to be that of a 'self-conscious radical'.*

Nehru had thus taken the heroic plunge; made up his mind to move on a different direction—different from the swarajists, the liberals and no-changers. As a first step, he made a successful effort to push through a resolution on complete independence in the turbulent Madras session of the Congress in 1927. The Congress thus committed itself to a new objective, and it was the beginning of Nehru's new role in shaping the policy of the organization then and shaping the destiny of the nation later: From then onwards, his political vision began to grow and develop with a revolutionary tinge. He felt political freedom and independence were only steps in the right direction, but without social freedom and a socialist structure of the society and the state neither the country nor the individual could develop much. Wherever he spoke, he stressed mainly the twin points of political independence and social freedom, considering the former only as a means to the attainment of the latter. But then the Congress had been quite unused to think on this line. Nehru, therefore, wanted to push it to a more radical position; for the Indian struggle, according to him, was essentially an economic struggle although it put on a nationalist garb. Being a popular leader, he had the advantage of making his influence felt much more than others. He continuously kept up the pressure on the organization in favour of socialism and consequently a number of resolutions reflecting socialistic trends were adopted from time to time.

Though his vigorous campaign for socialism continued for long both before and after independence, Nehru's concept of socialism remained largely undefined. He had no rigid adherence to any particular ideology. In fact, he was critical of both the Indian communists and the socialists who, according to him, were largely nurtured on the European ideas. He wanted socialism to grow out of Indian conditions and that too to be achieved only through full democratic processes. His concept of social democracy did not necessarily imply any conflict with individual freedom and civil liberty. In view of his tremendous respect for freedom and equality on the one hand and his total opposition to authoritarianism and regimentation on the other, and at the same time, his practical considerations arising out of his desire to carry the bulk of the

people with the system, he could not probably accept an ideologically inflexible position.

The problem with Nehru was that the intellectual in him found a ready acceptance of the social truths as revealed by scientific socialism. But Nehru the politician confronted by the realities of a semi-feudal Indian society and the bourgeois politics of the national Congress, had to reconcile himself to liberal democracy. In the process, an attempt was made to synthesise the best elements of both the systems in the name of democratic socialism or socialistic pattern as he called it later. Also looking at mass poverty and horrible backwardness in the country, Nehru could not think of any alternative to a socialist solution to that gigantic problem. But revolutionary socialism was neither feasible nor inevitable because of the consideration that bourgeois values of a free society were to be preserved. So his concept of socialism could become a practical proposition only through a full democratic process, through the consent of a majority.

The task before Nehru was, therefore, to continuously educate the people in the spirit of democratic socialism in order to win them over. This was indeed a frightened pragmatic approach based on political compromise, rooted more in the wisdom of practical politics than in any ideological conviction. In any case freedom and dignity of the individual were well preserved in Nehru's socialism which, if analysed objectively, was nothing but welfare capitalism.

Another notable step, Nehru took to transform the face of the Congress in a radical direction was the creation of a consciousness of economic planning. After 1936, he gradually came to the conclusion that it was no longer necessary to abolish the capitalist system as a whole. All that he wanted was to reform it by gradually introducing some elements of socialism so that it could function under some measure of social control. It should be noted that in the 1920s when he bitterly criticized capitalism and held it responsible for all the ills and evils of the society, he was, in fact, attacking the 'laissez faire capitalism'. The growth of capitalism since then, particularly after the Second World War, clearly demonstrated its capacity to exercise some measure of social control over the possessors of wealth and to accommodate some basic principles of socialism. It is also worth remembering in this context that Nehru paid rich tributes to modern capitalism for many of its

great achievements in the field of knowledge, science, technology, medicine, sanitation and a host of other things.

Insistence on planning for socio-economic reconstruction was an outstanding feature of Nehru's thought. To him, planning was a necessary ingredient of a socialist economy in a democratic structure. However he had no intention to put stress on its socialist aspect. He preferred to remain vague and imprecise while formulating the social objectives of planning. His idea at that stage was simply to take advantage of the Congress resolutions of 1929 and 1931, the former pleading for revolutionary socio-economic changes, and the latter demanding state control over key industries and services. His concept of economic planning was not based on any dogmatic or doctrinaire considerations. According to him, it was unwise for India to imitate any economic model from any other country. India must evolve a system which suited her own requirement and genius. Such a flexible and half-hearted approach led him to believe that a mixed economy was most suitable for India.

Nehru's concept of a mixed economy involved the recognition of public and private sectors' participation in the developmental activities. Within the broad framework of the national plan, private enterprise was to receive sufficient encouragement to operate in many fields. The result was that the country, under his leadership, began to embark upon a capitalist path of development, planned and controlled to some extent because of a sizeable state sector and a few welfare measures. In spite of the populist slogan of 'socialism' and 'socialistic pattern', there was nothing really socialist in Nehru-government policies.

Nehru was the greatest champion of liberal democracy in India. More than most of the nationalists, he passionately loved freedom and political democracy. Influenced by the humanist liberal tradition of the West, he attached tremendous value to individual freedom. As a democrat he believed in the primacy of man. He was also keenly aware of the correlation between freedom and progress. He believed that no progress could be attained by man or society, if man's creative abilities were to remain suppressed. It is, however, significant to note that when Nehru defined democracy in terms of individual freedom or popular government or social self-discipline, he was speaking of the actual reality of the political system to be established in India after independence. But when he defined

democracy in terms of economic and social equality, he was speaking of an ideal, a distant goal to be achieved in due course. His idea of social self-discipline as an integral part of his democratic thought, necessarily implied peace and tolerance. If democracy was to ensure individual freedom, then that freedom, according to him, was to be considered in the larger context of social responsibility.

Nehru was the first amongst the nationalists to recognise the importance of science and technology for development and modernization of the Indian society. He believed that in the long course of history, science revolutionised the conditions of human life more than anything else. What he really desired was that the scientific approach be accepted as a way of life, as a process of thinking and as a method of adjusting social relations. But, science, he argued, must have a social objective, it must think in terms of the suffering millions. In other words, he wanted the fruits of all scientific discoveries to be enjoyed by the masses. His demand for scientific temper was, however, based on the conviction that India must get out of her traditional ways of thought and action. He wanted the Indian people to free themselves from the shackles of the past. At the same time he urged them to recondition their mind with the problems of the past and perspective on future. This was possible only when the people tried to imbibe what he called the 'scientific humanism'—the highest ideal of the present age.

Throughout his life, Nehru repeatedly stressed the importance of a secular policy as the vital instrument of modern democratic practice. He favoured a strong secular base for the state primarily for the maintenance of social stability and religious harmony among diverse groups. His sense of realism inculcated in him a strong conviction that a secular state alone could serve better a community divided by diverse religious faiths.

Another remarkable contribution of Nehru to the Indian National Congress was the fostering of an international outlook. Long before independence, Nehru had realised that national isolation was neither desirable nor possible in a world which was fast changing and becoming more of a unit. He wanted India to discard her narrow nationalism in favour of real internationalism. Unlike most of his colleagues in the Congress Nehru, from the beginning, showed keen interest in foreign affairs. He had an unusual grasp of the developing international trends and the Congress

invariably accepted his advice on foreign affairs. He possessed a rare ability to analyse the international situation by placing the national problem in the wider context of the world. He believed that Indian nationalism was based on the most intense internationalism and those who stood for national independence, always stood for widest internationalism. But the greatest enemy of such an international order, according to him, was imperialism which continuously thwarted all attempts towards world cooperation and world peace. He was clear in his mind that India's struggle against imperialism was part of the liberal world's fight against Fascism. In foreign affairs, he never wanted India to act as a satellite of any power bloc. Every international issue, according to him, had to be judged on its own merit keeping in view the twin objective of national interest and world peace. Thus Nehru was entirely responsible for the development of an independent, anticolonial, anti-imperialist foreign policy for India, and the policy of non-alignment initiated by him after independence was mainly aimed at ushering in a new era of world peace and cooperation. If India has attained over the years, a certain degree of prestige and honour, and if her voice is heard with respect and response in the country of nations, the credit goes entirely to Jawaharlal Nehru.

Nehru had a unique relationship with Gandhi. He was Gandhi's most critical follower. But Gandhi was not a mere critic of Nehru, he was much more than that. His event making role was partly on account of the qualitative transformation that he brought in the nature of the liberation movement, and partly on account of his choice of Nehru for the future political leadership of India. Despite all his great love, respect and goodwill for Nehru, Gandhi had serious differences with Nehru on many counts. They expressed in the open a great deal of their differences on many occasions, yet they clearly saw the common political objective which made them good comrades in arms. In spite of their free and frequent exchange of ideas, differences both fundamental and temperamental still persisted between the two on numerous issues and problems. True, very often they failed to convince each other; but certainly they influenced each other. Personal attachment and national interest never allowed them to part company with and in the practical life they were very near to each other.

More than most other nationalists, Nehru had a sound perception of Gandhi, his role and leadership in the movement. From the very beginning, he had recognised the dominant position of Gandhi inside and outside the Congress and it made no difference whether Gandhi held any formal position or not. His unique personality and the enormous influence that he wielded on the masses made him supreme. Nehru realised that Gandhi could not be ignored in any meaningful political action, and India could not do without Gandhi. Recognising that as one of the basic factors of the Indian political situation, Nehru, very often criticised Gandhi's viewpoint. But however valid and strong the ground for an honest difference of opinion, he ultimately withdrew his position in favour of Gandhi's judgement and saw to it that the latter's will prevailed at the end. Thus it may be argued that Nehru had a more realistic appreciation of Gandhi's role than others, and he knew well that by remaining ever loyal to Gandhi and by compromising on crucial occasions, he was positively serving the national cause as well as the fulfilment of his political mission.

Gandhi had high admiration for Nehru's intellectual ability and had publicly praised him for his virtue of wisdom and temperance. His reaction to young Nehru's protests and dissent was never coloured by any hatred or illwill. Despite their conflicting views on several issues and problems, there existed a vast area of perfect understanding and cooperation between them. As shown in the preceding two chapters, Gandhi knew well that, in spite of his extreme and radical expression of ideas, Nehru was quite sober in actions. He had tremendous confidence in Nehru's ability and competence. Throughout his career, Nehru was also extremely cautious in his approach and had never pushed his political differences to a breaking point. This he frankly conveyed to Subhas Chandra Bose when he criticised Nehru for not supporting him in his fight against Gandhi. He was not willing to oblige the socialists either, when Jayaprakash Narayan pleaded with him to come out of the Gandhian fold and lead the Congress Socialist Party. Nehru was constantly aware that any political confrontation with Gandhi who was the undisputed leader of the masses and who was virtually in full command of the political situation, would be disastrous to his own political future.

Tolerance and moderation, unity and harmony and above all political sagacity and maturity, always guided their fascinating and

exciting political partnership. There was absolutely no scope for any political confrontation or adventurism either. Both Gandhi and Nehru were fully devoted to the cause of the liberation of the country and so their partnership continued unimpaired. In the absence of personal animosity, there was a more genuine understanding and appreciation of each other's point of view even in their mutual criticism. Therefore, while analysing their political association, it is necessary to focus the complementary aspect as much as the conflicting aspect.

Throughout their long, personal and political relationship Gandhi and Nehru acted as a corrective and restraint to each other. Nehruism was not a repudiation of Gandhism though Nehru passionately desired to go much beyond Gandhi. On the contrary it was Nehru who interpreted Gandhi in the most creative, balanced and purposeful manner and without that, Gandhism would have been 'distorted and vulgarised' by those worshippers who were out 'to create a Gandhian cult'. Without Nehru, a critical appreciation of the message of Gandhi would not have reached the modern India in its true spirit. Had he not acted as a potent and timely restraint, Gandhism with its 'traditional, religious and anti-western outlook' would have been freely misused by the forces of 'mysticism, irrationalism and revivalism'.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly it was the Gandhian spell that made it possible for Nehru to discover the real India of the poor, illiterate and superstitious masses. Without Gandhi, Nehru might not have become the leader of the nation. The vision of a new India, which subsequently became an inseparable part of the national consciousness was, in fact, rooted in the collective wisdom of both Gandhi and Nehru. In the last phase of his career, Nehru became more and more addicted to the quintessence of Gandhism and began to stress the need for linking the 'scientific approach' with the 'humanistic approach.' Even when he was faced with the gigantic task of national re-construction, he had not drifted away from the peaceful means and the democratic processes which he inherited largely from Gandhi. As a matter of fact the institutionalisation of mass politics by Gandhi and of Nehru's leadership were the two most potent factors that shaped the post-independent India in terms of its political stability and to an extent its economic progress.

<sup>4</sup>P.C. Joshi, "The challenge of a New Society", in *Gandhi and Nehru*, op. c.l., pp. 38-39.

Subhas Chandra Bose, like Nehru, was one of the front rank leaders of the National Congress. Although both had an aristocratic background, Bose stood in sharp contrast to Nehru. While Nehru was a man of liberal outlook and ideas, Bose was a man of adventurist spirit and reckless actions. The one was extremely sober and cautious while the other was impatient and adventurous. Though both were known for their radical views, there was qualitative difference in their concept of radicalism. Bose's conception of leftwing politics did not have any ideological basis despite the fact that he often raised the questions of capital and labour, landlords and peasants and also the social evil of the existing caste system. But his criticism of Nehru and others finally gave the impression that anti-Gandhi stand was the hallmark of his radicalism.

Like Nehru, Subhas Bose was one of the most vocal critics of Gandhi. But there was a marked difference in their overall evaluation of Gandhi, his role and leadership. Unlike Nehru, Bose did not appreciate Gandhi's commanding and dictatorial position in the Congress. While Bose wanted to pursue the path of uncompromising militancy, and was never satisfied with the Gandhian technique of action, Nehru broadly accepted the Gandhian discipline and steadily followed the path of peaceful agitation and possible compromises. While Bose regarded Gandhi as a reformist and not a revolutionary, Nehru described him as the greatest revolutionary of his time. The radicalism of Subhas Bose remained throughout incompatible with the revolutionary spirit of Gandhi, but the radicalism of Nehru always showed its adaptability. While Bose thought in terms of an alternative leadership in place of Gandhi, and worked vigorously for the change, Nehru never thought in terms of any change. In his effort to wean away from Gandhi and Nehru, all those 'progressive and radical elements,' he found it necessary to form a new party 'Forward Bloc'. But Nehru fought all his battles against individuals and groups by remaining throughout as the most disciplined soldier of the Congress. He completely disliked the idea of forming any group or party.

That Nehru and Bose had divergent political perspective was obvious on many occasions. Nehru's political perspective had always the tinge of an ideological mooring and an awareness of the political and social reality. Bose, on the contrary, had no ideological inhibitions in his search for collaborators to overthrow imperialism. He was wholly guided by the considerations of an all out

offensive against the enemy in a most militant manner. While Nehru's appeal to the young radicals necessarily implied the idea of not alienating their more conservative elders, Subhas Bose's radicalism only helped to create distrust and suspicion.

The spirit of an inquiry into the forces that influence the emerging world did not make much of an appeal to him. Unlike Nehru, he showed no awareness of the dangerous consequences from the growth of Fascism and Nazism. He was not much impressed by the considerations of the cruel suppression of human freedom under Fascism and Nazism. While Nehru found in the defeat of Fascism, a necessary condition for the attainment of Indian independence, Subhas Bose pleaded with the Congress to forge an alliance with it for the same cause. Fascinated by its organizational discipline, he even emphasised the vital need in India of a political system of an authoritarian character. Unlike Nehru who was deeply committed to freedom and democracy, Subhas Bose openly denounced the democratic system and rejected it as most unsuitable to India.

Subhas Bose's general outlook on international affairs seemed to be largely conventional. But Nehru, on the contrary, had a much wider understanding and approach to international politics. His keen awareness of the danger to world peace arising from the growth of certain forces in the West and his desire for Asian resurgence had in no way impressed Subhas Bose. As a keen observer of the growing international trends, Nehru was able to sense the developing tension and crisis in the West and their possible impact on India.

Bose criticised Nehru for compromising many a time his principled stand in the name of unity. He regarded such frequent shifting of stand as a clear weakness of Nehru's personality. However, what annoyed him most was Nehru's absolute loyalty to Gandhi. His submissiveness to Gandhi was the greatest irritant in his relation with Bose. According to Bose, Nehru started moving close to Gandhi in 1937 and became Gandhi's close-confidant in 1939. Nehru's flat refusal to join him in his confrontation with Gandhi was the main point of friction between the two.

Subhas Bose's attempt to unite all the left and radical groups to fight what he called the right-wing leadership of Gandhi and Nehru ended in utter disaster. The Royists, the Congress Socialists and the Communists—all left him in the lurch. In 1942 Bose again

made a serious political miscalculation about the future leadership of Nehru. Nehru's differences with Gandhi over India's participation in British war efforts, would alienate him from the Gandhi wing and he might not be accepted as leader in succession to Mahatma. This, as in many other things, clearly showed Bose's failure to understand the power equation in the Congress politics.

M.N. Roy was one of the strongest critics of Nehru. In the early phase of their political career, though both were influenced and attracted by the study of Marxism, they subsequently got out of it almost completely. Disenchanted with the methods of communism in many ways, both Nehru and Roy were interested in finding an alternative in the first half of the present century. While Nehru, in the process came down to the philosophy of modern liberalism, Roy after a brief spell as a staunch communist, developed a new philosophy of Radical-Humanism. As outstanding intellectuals, both possessed remarkable ability to analyse contemporary issues and politics. Though both were seriously engaged in the political activities connected with national liberation, they were intensely international in their basic outlook and the events and issues of world politics had a greater impact on them.

Yet Nehru and Roy were unable to forge a meaningful political partnership or even to prepare a common strategy in the pursuit of their goal. They had apparently chosen divergent paths in their long political career and it was Nehru and not Roy who emerged as the front rank leader on the national scene. Roy not only failed in his attempt to wrest the leadership from Gandhi and Nehru, but remained throughout a 'political outsider'.

Roy's critique of Gandhi was nothing but a contemptuous repudiation of Gandhism. He repeatedly stated that Gandhism was only the message of medievalism and as such it had nothing to contribute to the advancement of the Indian society. Almost equally contemptuous was his criticism of Nehru who was looked upon as a political opportunist. There was, however, a perceptible change in Roy's attitude to Gandhi and the Congress immediately after his release from prison in 1936. In that conciliatory mood he was rather inclined to cooperate with both Gandhi and Nehru, and his writings during this period reflected a spirit of compromise.

Much of Roy's criticism of Gandhi was most unpalatable to Nehru who was not impressed by the argument for isolating the reformist elements. Nehru never thought in terms of such a separa-

tion. But that was perhaps the only task in which Roy was mainly interested for many years. Unlike Roy, Nehru was determined to fight all his battle of ideas within the Congress itself. Nehru did not have a sectarian political approach in his fight for national liberation.

One of the fundamental points which divided them was that, while Nehru recognised the inherent capability of Asian nationalism to generate necessary mass enthusiasm, Roy refused to accept it. Again while Nehru realised the potentially revolutionary character of the Indian middle class, Roy was not convinced of it. Nehru had a better and more realistic appraisal of the Indian political situation; but Roy showed a kind of superficial and often erroneous understanding of the forces of Indian nationalism. Roy's distrust of the peasantry and his own alienation owing to his long absence from the national political scene, inevitably stood in his way of a possible integration with the nationalist forces.

Nehru and Roy held conflicting views about the role of the Congress. Without failing to recognise the bourgeois character of the Congress Nehru considered it as the only potential instrument of mass action. Roy, on the other hand, wanted to throw the national bourgeoisie out of bounds of the revolutionary masses, so that the struggle might smoothly develop into a class war.

Roy had no mind to spare Nehru practically on any point that he considered. Nehru's inner contradictions, his lack of political conviction, his attitude towards the war, the August Offer of Lord Linlithgow, his rejection of Cripps' proposal, and acceptance of Lord Wavell plan, composition and character of his interim government, and above all his socialism—were all brought in for a thorough critical evaluation, that the whole exercise appeared to be nothing but an open indictment of Nehru. Much of Roy's criticism of Nehru was based on his belief that the latter often failed to act upon his own convictions and was ever ready for compromises. Roy regarded Nehru as an unwitting tool of Gandhi and a popularity hunting demagogue who always tried to rationalise the obscurantism of Gandhi. This was an unwarranted criticism. However Roy was not wrong when he said that Nehru was somewhat confused in his thinking on socialism, and that confusion stood in his way of lifting the movement to a higher goal of social revolution. By mixing up nationalism and vaguely conceived socialist ideas, Nehru had merely confused the issues.

Without much clarity of thought and sincerity of approach, Nehru continued to preach socialism which could only help to arrest and stagnate the growth of progressive forces in the country. According to Roy, the failure of Nehru to organize a sustained national struggle for social revolution was to be found in his intellectual conviction nurtured by the European liberal tradition. It should be noted that Roy's assessment of Nehru's socialism was from a Marxist point of view. His main purpose was to expose Nehru's vacillating and contradictory approach to his much publicised socialism.

Nehru had serious differences with the Indian communists on many accounts. Their evaluation of Gandhi and his strategy and tactics, as well as the character of the whole movement were the bone of contention between the two. To the communists, the nationalist movement was essentially a bourgeois movement and Gandhi was a reactionary willing to compromise with the British imperialists. As a staunch supporter of Gandhi, Nehru was obviously provoked by such a characterisation. While admitting that it was a bourgeois movement Nehru put heavy emphasis on the point, that in colonial countries, nationalism took precedence over all other ideologies and it should derive its strength from all the classes. But what annoyed him most was the communist attack on Gandhi whose political leadership he could never doubt or ignore, however much he differed with him.

The communists also denounced the Indian National Congress as an organization of the Indian bourgeoisie working in alliance with princes, landlords and zamindars. They never regarded it as an instrument of social change. On the contrary they believed that the principal objective of the Congress was to exert pressure on the British to extract more and more industrial and commercial concessions in the interests of the Indian capitalists and zamindars. Such a crude characterisation of the Congress was most unpalatable to Nehru who felt that the communists were the victims of their own false notions about the Indian political development. He also thought that the communists' analysis of the Indian nationalist movement was purely on the basis of European labour movements and they failed even to recognise the middle class intellectuals as the most revolutionary force. He was highly critical of them for their ignorance of the national traditions as well as their failure on the rural front. Their interest mainly in the urban proletariat

alienated them from the bulk of the population and they completely failed to take advantage of a situation which was objectively favourable to them. He chided the communists for their dogmatic, unrealistic and negative approach. He had no mind to appreciate the rigid doctrine of communism, its suppression of individual freedom, its contempt for the moral and spiritual side of life and its association with the cult of violence and hatred. He was convinced that violence had absolutely no place in the modern world, and any attempt at forcible imposition of ideas would be counter-productive. Nehru believed that the communist policy in India was essentially opportunist, and during the entire period of the liberation movement, they had neither an independent policy nor a consistent approach to the Indian problem.

The failure of the communists to formulate an independent and consistent policy was largely due to their dependence on the Soviet and British communists. A careful analysis of their ideological formulations during this period reveals that there were many contradictions in their approach. When the Second World War broke out, the communist party opposed it as an imperialist war, but when Hitler attacked Soviet Union, they changed their strategy and called it a 'peoples war'. Later at a crucial stage in India's freedom struggle in 1942, the communists denounced the 'Quit India' movement and became thoroughly unpopular. Their policy of open support to the Muslim League embittered their relations with the Congress nationalists and Nehru felt deeply distressed by it. Their pro-Muslim League policy not only worsened the communal problem, but led to the party's near total isolation from the main-stream of the national politics. The position of the Communist Party of India on the communal problem as well as on the demand for Pakistan was in sharp contrast with that of Nehru. He was most unhappy to find the communists steadily drifting away in defiance of the nationalist sentiments. They opposed the fundamental policy of the Congress at a crucial time in its history. The failure of the communists to organize an independent anti-imperialist struggle based on a realistic appraisal of the Indian situation, was largely responsible for the slackening process of the communist movement. They could not succeed in their attempt to capture the leadership of the movement because of their failure to recognize the dynamic role of Gandhi and Nehru, and the anti-imperialist role of a section of the national bourgeoisie. Their uncharac-

able attack on Gandhi and Nehru who were virtually the symbol of the nationalist struggle, became thoroughly counter productive, and could help to make the party's own alienation from the nationalist mainstream.

Despite all the criticism and counter criticism, Jawaharlal Nehru played the heroic role of a dynamic leader in the long struggle for freedom and independence. His practical idealism coupled with his intelligent grasp of the complexities of the Indian politics as well as the power politics within the National Congress, virtually put him in command of the struggle in its final phase. Some of the ideas which he popularised during the movement on the national and international front, found their utmost logic and relevance in their practical application after independence. It was his conviction that the adoption of a progressive, rational, secular and scientific approach would not only strengthen the nationalist movement but would eventually pave the way for the emergence of a stable political system and a national consensus on all outstanding issues and problems. With all his failures and shortcomings, independent India has gained considerably from him to make itself modern and credible. During the seventeen years of his stewardship of the country it was generally felt that it has a sense of direction and purpose.

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